



Section 5:  
Building a Strong  
**Working Community**

# Section 5: Building a Strong **Working Community**

## Issues:

- Economy
- Community Facilities

## Aims

4. Creating a more competitive, diverse and resilient economy based on an exceptional and inspirational environment that can adapt to change and challenges and maximise opportunities by building on its strengths and underpinned by effective infrastructure and an appropriately available and skilled workforce.

# Building a Strong Working Community

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## Building a Strong Working Community (1)

297. The islands are a place where a variety of employment needs have to be met to support a working community. It is important that those employment needs are consistent with protecting Scilly's natural and historic landscape, particularly as the economy is largely underpinned by its exceptional environment.
298. Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage does not need to conflict with supporting vibrant, healthy and productive living and working communities.
299. Nationally, the Government is committed to securing sustainable economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths and meeting the twin challenges of global competition and a low-carbon future. Whilst the islands do not fit well within the mainland 'growth' context, it is nevertheless important to create a sustainable economic environment to improve prosperity and productivity, and make the islands nationally and internationally competitive.

## Building a Strong Working Community (2)

- 300. Employment** The economy of the Isles of Scilly is unusual in many ways. It is remarkably self-contained and dominated by tourism, with high levels of very small businesses. The cost of living is high and there are low levels of unemployment. These factors make the economy particularly vulnerable to economic and financial shocks, and to any downturn in the tourism trade.
301. Sustaining a successful economy will require businesses to be able to evolve and adapt to new challenges and to develop new opportunities. It will also be necessary to recognise that the future stability of the community is linked to a strong economy, and that change will be required and therefore supported where it is necessary and sympathetic.
302. As there are no specific essential employment developments identified in the Local Plan over the plan period, the policies in this section seek to encourage proposals that will help strengthen and diversify the islands' economy and, wherever possible, lead to a rise in average incomes whilst sustaining a high-quality environment. As the quality of the environment underpins the economy, it would be inappropriate to encourage any development that threatens to undermine its world-class status. In setting out a positive framework to promote the sustainable growth and diversification of the economy, and enable changes for businesses, the Local Plan seeks to support appropriate development under Policy WC1.

## Building a Strong Working Community (3)

303. Given the islands' location, size and physical environment, the options for creating a more competitive and diversified economy will be challenging, and it is probable that any enhancement of the economy will mean that successful new businesses will be trading in niche markets, will offer specialist services, or provide high-value/low-bulk goods. Linked to a more competitive and diversified economy is the provision of a more reliable, resilient and year-round transport service to the mainland and between each island, more affordable homes, good-quality office space, the ability to recruit and retain skilled and adaptable staff, and good business support services.
304. The Smart Islands programme and similar sustainable programmes, as well as the availability of superfast broadband, provide an opportunity to diversify the economy and create employment opportunities that offer higher-skilled and better-paid jobs; through, for example, enabling a range of research, technology and knowledge-based businesses and organisations to develop or relocate to the Isles of Scilly. The Smart Islands programme in particular provides a significant economic opportunity that responds positively to national policy and takes advantage of the geographic location and small scale of the Isles of Scilly. The concept of Smart Islands positions the Isles of Scilly as an innovation test-bed, providing a place where new innovative systems and technologies can be tested and developed, then replicated elsewhere in the UK and beyond. The Smart Islands initiative has been recognised by Central Government in the 2017 Industrial Strategy 'Building a Britain Fit for the Future', and has the potential to support a sustainable economic future for the islands.

## Building a Strong Working Community (4)

305. Agriculture and horticulture, through flower-growing in particular, has helped create the islands' distinctive landscape. Sustainable farming practices are essential for maintaining the characteristic landscapes of the islands. Traditionally, farming on the islands has been on a small scale, and it has limited capacity for physical expansion. However, farming remains an important aspect of what makes Scilly distinct and contributes to its sustainability and self-sufficiency. Similarly, fishing is an important part of the islands' culture and heritage, and is practised on a small scale. Supporting the growth and diversification of agriculture, horticulture and fishing, particularly where it contributes to local food production, is critical to the islands' future and long-term prosperity.
306. Tourism over the plan period is likely to remain the largest part of the economy, and so it is especially important that the tourism sector is supported in improving the quality of its offer, and that it responds to the expectations of visitors. A key challenge for tourism is to maximise the quality of its product and provide an offer that appeals to a range of visitors, including opening up to, or creating, new tourism markets and niches. Improving quality, attracting new markets, extending the season and improving productivity will result in a more resilient, competitive and sustainable visitor economy, which in turn provides better career opportunities and wages.
307. Policy WC1 sets out a general employment policy to apply to all types of employment development. Appropriate employment and business development are encouraged where they avoid negative impacts, so that the economic benefits arising from the islands' exceptional environment can be maintained, and its special qualities are not compromised.

# Policy WC1 General Employment Policy

Development proposals that strengthen, enhance and diversify the islands' economy will be supported where they are appropriately designed, scaled and located, in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan.



# Building a Strong Working Community (5)

308. Where businesses grow and intensify their activity, support will be given to extend or provide new premises, provided there is no unacceptable impact on the appearance and character of the landscape and other special island qualities. The aim of the Local Plan is to enable successful businesses to expand appropriately without causing harm. Encouragement will be given to home-based businesses, the expansion of existing businesses, as well as new development in response to economic opportunities.

309. **Home-Based Businesses** Where development can be accommodated as part of a residential use or it is compatible with the area, then it will be supported under Policy WC2. The impacts of the business will require that the capacity of the infrastructure and road network, including car parking and other infrastructure pressures, is acceptable, and that the use does not harm the amenity of the area, or result in visual harm to the landscape as a result of extensions or polluting activities, including noise, odour and light.

# Policy WC2

## Home-Based Businesses

- 1) Small-scale home-based businesses will be supported in residential properties including:
  - a) the change of use of existing buildings, or
  - b) small-scale extensions, or
  - c) the use of ancillary buildings where they are well related to existing buildings; or
  - d) new buildings within the domestic curtilage, where no suitable buildings exist for conversion.
- 2) Development proposals will be supported if there are no unacceptable adverse impacts as a result of the specific use, in accordance with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

# Building a Strong Working Community (6)

**310. New Employment Development** There are a number of existing employment sites across the inhabited islands; these have a variety of business or storage uses. Such sites comprise an important element of the island economy and provide local job opportunities. Within the boundaries of existing employment sites, proposals for redevelopment or intensification through extensions or new buildings will be permitted, provided there is no significant harm to the landscape, and that proposals deal comprehensively with the whole site. Proposals that involve the extension of the site boundary into the countryside will be considered on their individual merits. Open storage will only be permitted if it is not visually intrusive.

**311.** In order to minimise the wider impacts of new employment developments, it is appropriate to encourage these to be located in already built-up areas. This would minimise both visual impacts and the need for new infrastructure, as well as reduce the number of vehicle movements, as such locations are more likely to be accessible to the islands' workforce. Proposals for new employment developments are supported under Policy WC3, where it is appropriate to steer such development into already built-up areas, or areas where harm to the wider landscape can be minimised, unless it can be demonstrated that a rural site is necessary due to the nature of the business proposal.



# Policy WC3

## New Employment Development

- 1) The redevelopment or extension of buildings or erection of new buildings for employment use will be permitted provided that proposals accord with Policy WC1, and where:
  - a) it is well integrated within an existing settlement; or
  - b) it is in the countryside where the business activity and scale is appropriate to its location and demonstrates a functional and/or operational requirement to be in such a location; or
  - c) it is an extension to an existing business where relocation would be impractical or unviable; and in all cases
  - d) it does not result in an unacceptable impact on the environment or residential amenities, in accordance with other relevant policies within the Local Plan.

# Building a Strong Working Community (7)

312. On St Mary's it is important that Porthmellon Business Park/Industrial Estate is safeguarded as an important resource for the islands. Policy WC4 seeks to ensure that this site remains available for prospective businesses and industrial uses. Policy WC4 seeks to safeguard other parts of the islands from industrial or commercial



# Policy WC4

## Alternative Uses for Business or Industrial Land and Buildings

- 1) On St Mary's proposals that result in the loss of business or industrial premises or land, within Porthmellon Business Park/Industrial Estate, as identified on the Policies Map, will only be permitted where:
  - a) a clear case is made that the premises site is no longer required to meet the economic needs of the islands'; or
  - b) the current activity is causing or could cause harm to the character of the area or the amenities of residents; or
  - c) it would result in the provision of better quality premises or space as part of a mixed use scheme;
  - d) it would not result in the loss of existing car parking or the free movement of vehicles; and
  - e) it would not have a significant detrimental impact on the integrity and operation of any remaining businesses.
- 2) On the Off-Islands, proposals that result in the loss of lawfully operating business use or land essential for a viable and lawfully operating use or business, will be permitted where it accords with a)-e) above.

## Building a Strong Working Community (8)

- 313. Tourism** The Local Plan aims to support the islands' ambition to be an internationally competitive visitor destination, capitalising on Scilly's exceptional environment. As such, the Local Plan will seek to support the development and diversification of sustainable tourism, leisure and recreational developments that benefit the economy of the islands, to match and protect its exceptional environment. Support will therefore be given to proposals for the provision of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where these cannot be met by existing facilities; as well as for the retention and development of local services and community facilities, which could include local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
314. A strong tourism economy will help support and maintain services and community facilities on the islands, especially on the off-islands, and contribute to the management of the environment. Fundamentally, tourism supports vital transport links connecting the islands to the mainland, as well as between the islands.
315. Given the importance of tourism, it is essential that the tourism sector is ready to continually improve its offer and respond to the needs of visitors. New tourism development should enrich and enhance the islands' assets and resources, rather than harming the very character, quality and beauty that make them attractive to visitors and residents.

## Building a Strong Working Community (9)

316. New visitor accommodation will be supported where it improves the quality and choice of existing tourism and responds to the changing needs and expectations of visitors, without reducing the housing stock available to meet the community's needs. It will be important to ensure a balance between the types of accommodation offered, to appeal to the widest range of visitors. There is an expectation that new tourism accommodation will be sustainable in terms of water and energy usage, and proposals must comply with Policies SS1 and SS2.
317. To sustain the islands as a sustainable and competitive visitor destination, it is necessary to support, wherever appropriate, improvements to existing visitor accommodation. Development proposals, however, that would result in the loss of existing housing stock will be resisted, whether this is serviced accommodation or self-catering, as this can exacerbate the housing problems of the islands. Reverting holiday letting accommodation back to permanent residential use, and resisting the loss of permanent homes to other forms of tourism accommodation, can have benefits of reducing the need for more housing development.
318. The re-use or extension of existing tourism accommodation and the provision of appropriately designed, scaled and sited new buildings can play an important part in the tourism industry, through the creation of self-catering accommodation or local craft or artists' studios, for example. Such development needs to be sensitively designed and sited so as to not have an adverse impact on the landscape, as required in Policy OE1 and Policy SS2.



## Building a Strong Working Community (10)

319. The provision of new or the expansion of existing tourist accommodation sites, including camping, chalets or other forms of self-catering accommodation, may cause visual intrusion and harm to the landscape. This impact could, in some circumstances, be minimised by effective, high-quality screening. It would, however, be inappropriate to allow the rapid expansion of such sites, due to the scale of the landscape and the likelihood of harm.
320. Proposals should help support other elements of the rural economy. For example, the extension of a public house to provide tourist accommodation may help to support viability, which in turn will benefit the local community.
321. Staff accommodation is an important aspect of supporting the tourism industry. Where new or expansions of businesses are proposed that require additional staff accommodation, this would need to be in accordance with Policy LC4. If accommodation approved or already provided is no longer needed to support a business, Policy LC5 seeks to ensure that any change of use meets local housing needs, unless it is otherwise demonstrated to meet the criteria for other uses.

# Policy WC5 (1) (2)

## Visitor Economy and Tourism Development

- 1) Proposals for new or upgraded tourism development will be permitted where they:
  - a) make a positive contribution to creating a sustainable, diverse and modern tourism economy; and
  - b) are located in sustainable and accessible locations; and
  - c) are appropriate to the site and its surroundings in terms of activity, scale and design; and
  - d) do not result in an unacceptable impact on the environment or residential amenities, in accordance with other relevant policies in the Local Plan; and
  - e) in the case of conversions, do not result in the loss of homes that would otherwise be available for permanent occupation, unless there are wider public benefits demonstrated to offset the loss of permanently available homes.
  
- 2) Proposals for tourism developments will be particularly encouraged subject to a) – e) above, and where it is demonstrated that they would:
  - a) extend the tourism season and increase productivity and wages in tourism;
  - b) support the promotion and interpretation of the islands' heritage; and
  - c) provide a viable and appropriate use for under-used buildings where they can be converted and are worthy of retention, and in accordance with Policy SS3.

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# Policy WC5 (3) (4)

## Visitor Economy and Tourism Development

- 3) In relation to serviced accommodation (hotels or guesthouses) development proposals that would involve the loss of existing and lawfully operating serviced accommodation, either in whole or in part, will only be permitted where:
  - a) an alternative form of tourism accommodation, including self-catering accommodation is provided, which is of benefit to the islands' overall tourism accommodation offer and where any existing element of permanent residential accommodation (e.g. for owners or staff) is retained; or
  - b) it is for another economic, community or mixed economic and community uses (including retail, leisure, restaurant or café) providing it complies with (1) a)-e).
  
- 4) Proposals for the change of use of lawfully operating serviced accommodation to residential dwellings will only be permitted where the accommodation is for the permanent occupation by staff or is otherwise meeting a local housing need, in which case an occupancy restriction will be imposed.

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# Policy WC5 (5) (6)

## Visitor Economy and Tourism Development

- 5) Proposals for a change of use of a dwelling where an informal bed and breakfast has been operating (and has not been subject to formal planning approval) or for any additional holiday letting accommodation within the curtilage, will not be permitted under (1) above, unless a certificate of lawful use has been obtained to demonstrate that the use of the property as a C1 guesthouse is lawful.
- 6) In all cases, proposals must demonstrate a reduction in waste, water and energy consumption, supported by the incorporation of clear sustainable design measures, in accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2. Applications will need to be supported by justification as to how the above is being addressed by the proposal.