



The countryside charity
Hampshire

VERSION 1 as at Sept 2021

Position Paper

Diversification of Farming

The aim of farm diversification is to increase the long-term viability of farming and forestry in the countryside by enabling farmers to set up additional income streams to their core business.

The principle aim of a farm diversification proposal should be to supplement the core agricultural or forestry operation and not to replace it. This need not mean that income from the diversified business be less than from the farm, but the diversified elements of the business should contribute a long-term sustainable income stream to the farm which allows the main business to withstand periods of sustained low returns.

Examples of possible farm diversification may include:

- Farm shops selling local produce
- Educational facilities directly related to the farm/countryside location
- Leisure facilities promoting the quiet enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities, including increased access to the countryside
- Tourist accommodation
- Small-scale generation of electricity or heat from local renewable sources of energy, primarily for use on site or in the local area
- Appropriately scaled processing facilities for the outputs of the unit or of other agriculture businesses in the local area
- Services to the agriculture sector that contribute to the sustainable maintenance of the landscape of the surrounding countryside.

CPRE Issue

CPRE's vision within the new 2020 Strategy **is for a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives**. With people living and working in active and sustainable rural



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communities, promoting rural life with a shared vision for a sustainable rural economy in which all communities can thrive and new and sustainable models of farming and better environmental land management as part of its core aims.

CPRE strongly supports rural economic activity that supports the landscape character and recognises the importance of sympathetic farm diversification to enable farming to be sustainable in the long term.

Farm diversification should be sympathetic to the original agricultural operation of the farm and should not be carried out to a level that would significantly supplement or replace the original farming activity.

Farms that successfully diversify are often able to put their existing farm assets to improved and better use. However, where farm diversification requires new building or other development then it can have a significant adverse impact on the landscape leading to increased noise and light pollution and increased levels of traffic along country lanes.

Guidance on Conversion of Redundant Agricultural Buildings

There are a wide range of permitted development rights available to farms, both for agricultural development and for the change of use of agricultural buildings, without the need for planning permission. Note that permitted development (PD) rights are set out in the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (Amended)* (referred to as the GPDO).

However, most agricultural developments and changes of use which do come under the category of permitted development will still be required to go through the prior notification system. The prior notification system places “conditions” on proposals for example the need to submit an application to the Local Planning Authority to determine if its 'Prior Approval' will be required. This allows the Local Planning Authority to consider the proposals, their likely impacts in regard to certain factors (e.g. transport and highways) and how these may be mitigated.

Work must not commence on the development until the Local Planning Authority has issued its determination, or the time period for it to do so has expired. It should, however, be noted that the Local Planning Authority's opportunity to influence the form of the development in Prior Notification cases will be limited, as compared to those requiring a full planning consent.



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Example Policy - Farm diversification

Development proposals relating to farm and forestry diversification will be permitted where:

- a) A diversification plan is submitted, which demonstrates that:
 - I. The proposed development(s) would contribute to the long-term benefit to the farming business as an agricultural operation
 - II. Diversification activities remain subsidiary to the agricultural operation, in terms of physical scale and environmental impact
 - III. The proposed development does not cause severance or disruption to the agricultural holding.
- b) The development re-uses or replaces existing buildings where feasible. Where this is not feasible, the development should be related physically and functionally to existing buildings, be of an appropriate scale, and retain agricultural character.
- c) Any outdoor storage is provided as a minor ancillary element of other uses.

NB In considering the wording of individual policies in Local Plans, it is important to bear in mind that Local Plans must be looked at as a whole. This means, for example, that policies for the protection of landscape must be applied when considering each and every planning application; and accordingly, there is generally no need for other policies to refer specifically to landscape matters.