



## Planning Policy Statement 4

**‘Planning and Economic  
Development’**

**November 2010**





Department of the  
**Environment**

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## **Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning and Economic Development**

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) set out the policies of the Department of the Environment on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

This Planning Policy Statement, PPS 4, sets out the Department's planning policies for economic development uses and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated and promoted in development plans. It seeks to facilitate and accommodate economic growth in ways compatible with social and environmental objectives and sustainable development.

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# Preamble

The Department of the Environment is responsible for development management in Northern Ireland.

The Department has a statutory duty, laid down in Article 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, to formulate and co-ordinate policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development. The Department is required to ensure such policy is in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy.

The Department's planning policies are normally issued through Planning Policy Statements and PPS 1 'General Principles' advises that:

*"Planning Policy Statements set out the policies of the Department on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals."*

This Planning Policy Statement (PPS), PPS 4 'Planning and Economic Development' sets out the Department's planning policies for economic development uses and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated and promoted in development plans. It seeks to facilitate and accommodate economic growth in ways compatible with social and environmental objectives and sustainable development.

For the purposes of this PPS, economic development uses comprise industrial, business and storage and distribution uses, as currently defined in Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004:

## **Class B1: Business**

Use -

- (a) as an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, professional and other services);
- (b) as a call centre; or
- (c) for research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

## **Class B2: Light Industrial**

Use for any industrial process which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

## **Class B3: General Industrial**

Use for the carrying on of any industrial process other than one falling within Class B2.

## **Class B4: Storage or distribution**

Use for storage or as a distribution centre.

With the exception of a limited number of specific policy references, mainly relating to acceptable alternative uses, this PPS does not provide policy for retail uses, financial, professional and other services, leisure or tourism, agriculture, waste disposal or waste management facilities, or minerals extraction, which are dealt with in other PPSs or in 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland'. However, the policy approach and associated guidance contained within this document may be useful in assessing proposals for other *sui generis*<sup>1</sup> employment uses.

**The PPS replaces PPS 4 'Industrial Development' published in March 1997 and supersedes the following provisions of 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland' insofar as they apply to Class B1 of the 2004 Use Classes Order:**

**Policy IC 16: Office Development**

**Policy IC 17: Small Office and Business Development**

**Where the above policies are referred to elsewhere in the Planning Strategy, the policies of this statement take precedence.**

**In addition, the advice provided in Annex 1 of this PPS now takes precedence over the provisions of Development Control Advice Note 13 'Creches, Day Nurseries and Pre-School Playgroups' (1993) insofar as it relates to childminding.**

This PPS has been subject to an equality impact screening exercise in line with the statutory obligation contained in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The outcome of this exercise indicates that the PPS is unlikely to have any significant adverse implications for equality of opportunity or community relations.

Nothing in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources will be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure by the Department are subject to economic appraisal and will also have to be considered having regard to the overall availability of resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Sui Generis – 'of its own kind': in this context, refers to land uses which do not fall into any particular use class in the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004.

# Introduction

- 1.1 Economic growth is considered the Executive's top strategic priority in its first Programme for Government (PfG), in order to raise the quality of life for the people of Northern Ireland, through increasing economic opportunities for all, on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis. The Executive considers it essential to create a vibrant economy, to produce employment and wealth for the future, if a cohesive, inclusive and just society is to be achieved.
- 1.2 A key concern for government, therefore, is to continue restructuring the Region's economy from a low-wage, low-value added to a high-wage, high-value added, knowledge-based economy which can meet the challenges of a highly competitive, global environment.
- 1.3 The planning system has a key role to play in achieving a vibrant economy. It seeks to promote sustainable economic development through supportive planning policies, zoning land for development, identifying and protecting development opportunities and integrating employment generation with essential supporting provision in terms of housing and infrastructure.
- 1.4 The key aim of this PPS is to facilitate the economic development needs of the Region in ways consistent with protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development. Safeguarding of environment, and the fostering of a 'clean, green image', can provide economic advantages and employment in itself in terms of the promotion of, for example, tourism, recreation, agri-food and quality of life attractions. Greater use of renewable energy sources will also contribute to protection of the environment and sustainability.

# Policy Context

## Programme for Government

- 2.1 The Executive's first Programme for Government, published in January 2008, sets out its plans and priorities for 2008-2011 and states:

*“Our primary focus over the lifetime of this Programme for Government will be on growing the economy. Sustainable economic growth and increased prosperity will provide the opportunities and means to enhance quality of life, reduce poverty and disadvantage, increase wealth, health and well-being and build stronger, more sustainable and empowered communities.”*

- 2.2 To support this and the Executive's other priorities, the PfG sets out a framework of 23 Public Service Agreements which confirm the key actions the Executive will take in support of its priorities, and the outcomes and targets the Executive aims to achieve over the next three years.

## Regional Development Strategy

- 2.3 The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (RDS), was published by the Department for Regional Development (DRD) in September 2001. The RDS provides a strategic spatial planning framework for Northern Ireland and guides physical development in the Region up to 2025. It seeks to promote a balanced distribution of development which will facilitate economic growth and competitiveness, and distribute the benefits of economic opportunity throughout the Region.
- 2.4 The RDS provides an overarching strategic framework for the preparation of planning policy and development plans. The framework provides the basis for the strengthening of the regional economy, for the reduction of social disadvantage and for the planning of future development in a sustainable way.
- 2.5 The Strategy seeks to ensure that a network of economic opportunities is provided, with development plans making provision for a generous and continuous supply of land for employment purposes. It facilitates a spread of economic opportunities across the Region, identifying a strategic network of hubs, corridors and gateways as the focus for economic activity and development opportunities. There is a strong commitment in the Strategy to the reinvigoration of town centres, 'brownfield' initiatives and the principle of mixed-use development.

- 2.6 Great importance is placed on the identified regional gateways as suitable locations for major economic development, freight distribution activities and additional employment generation. The RDS emphasises the promotion and exploitation of the potential for economic development at selected locations on the strategic network of key transport corridors and links, facilitating the clustering of engineering and high technology office type businesses and providing appropriate locations for transport dependent industries at well-accessed locations normally on the edge of towns.
- 2.7 An additional objective of the Spatial Development Strategy is to promote balanced community development. It seeks to sustain a vibrant rural community living in revitalised small towns, villages and small rural settlements with an appropriate scale of rural development in the open countryside. This will be assisted through the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations and of appropriate nature and scale, satisfactorily integrated with the settlement or rural landscape.
- 2.8 The DRD, in its first 5-year review of the RDS<sup>2</sup>, adjusted some of the Objectives, Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) and the Supporting Actions of the SPGs in the Strategy, including some that are relevant to economic development. In particular, the Strategic Employment Locations (SELs) concept in SPG – ECON 4 is removed together with the reference to SELs in ECON 2.1, as it is considered that the concept no longer matches the challenges facing the Northern Ireland economy.

## **Sustainable Development Strategy**

- 2.9 The Northern Ireland Executive's 'Everyone's Involved – Sustainable Development Strategy' (SDS) published in May 2010 recognises the aim to bring viability, stability and opportunity to Northern Ireland's economic activities and programmes. The SDS identifies "building a dynamic, innovative economy" as a priority area for action and commits to the integration of sustainable development into the policy process, to reflect the objectives expressed throughout the Strategy.

## **Transportation Policy**

- 2.10 The Government's transport strategy for the Region is committed to greater integration of transport with land use planning in order to support more sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel. Northern Ireland transportation policy encourages development to be sited where there is a choice of transport and the location is not

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<sup>2</sup> The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 – First 5 Year Review. Adjustments to the Regional Development Strategy (June 2008)

dependent predominantly on access by car. Decisions on the location of economic development, therefore, should take account of access to services and the overall need to reduce travel.

## **DARD Rural Strategy**

- 2.11 The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Rural Strategy, published in October 2006, seeks to provide a broad strategic direction and framework for rural development policy in Northern Ireland and to facilitate a co-ordinated and co-operative approach to rural development over the period 2007-2013. It fits within, and is an integral part of, the broader DARD Strategic Plan 2006-2011. It also takes account of the 2007-2013 EU Rural Development Programme which aims to protect and enhance the rural environment and to contribute to the development of competitive and sustainable rural businesses and thriving rural communities.

## **Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy**

- 2.12 The Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy ('Lifetime Opportunities'), was published by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2006. It outlines a set of ambitious and challenging long-term goals and targets to work towards eliminating poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by 2020. As part of this Strategy, it will be important to ensure that disadvantaged groups and communities are able to benefit from better access to employment opportunities.
- 2.13 Within the context of the PPS this will be achieved primarily through development plans which, in their role of facilitating economic development and creating a framework which will allow investment in job creation to take place, will be strongly influenced by Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy considerations.

## Policy Objectives

3.1 The objectives of this Statement are:

- to promote sustainable economic development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- to tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality, size and location;
- to sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale;
- to support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites and buildings where they meet the needs of particular economic sectors;
- to promote mixed-use development and improve integration between transport, economic development and other land uses, including housing; and
- to ensure a high standard of quality and design for new economic development.

## Development Plans

- 4.1 Development plans set out how future development will be accommodated during the plan period within the overarching strategic framework provided by the RDS.
- 4.2 In terms of economic development, the RDS, while seeking to promote the balanced spread of opportunities across Northern Ireland by focusing on the Belfast Metropolitan Area, Londonderry and Craigavon, and exploiting the economic potential of key transport corridors and regional gateways, also supports the development of a strong, diversified and competitive rural economy.
- 4.3 Within this framework, development plans will aim to ensure that there is an ample supply of suitable land available to meet economic development needs within the plan area, and will seek to support job creation by identifying and protecting a portfolio of the most appropriate job creation opportunities.

## Strategic Guidance

### *RDS Context*

- 4.4 The RDS aims to create conditions conducive to achieving further sustainable economic growth, and includes a Spatial Development Strategy that provides the framework for identifying *“a range of development opportunities for job creation across the Region, capable of accommodating emerging and new growth sectors of the economy and suitable for a variety of business sizes; opportunities which are attractive to inward investment, and to the creation and expansion of indigenous businesses and community enterprises”*.
- 4.5 It identifies a strategic network of hubs, corridors and gateways as the focus for economic activity and development opportunities, and places an emphasis on reducing the need for travel by making use of good connections to Key Transport Corridors within the Regional Strategic Transport Network.
- 4.6 Overall, the RDS aims to provide a framework for sustainable regional growth by promoting town centres as major locations for economic growth, by focusing on the re-use of previously developed land, and by supporting the principle of mixed use development.

### *Current Trends*

- 4.7 RDS direction continues to indicate that city/town centres should be the first choice for various types of development, particularly retail, office and service developments, in order to reinforce the existing

administrative and service functions of many settlements, as well as creating new employment that is accessible to large sections of the population. However, as changing patterns of employment continue to impact on the land, property and infrastructure needs of the Northern Ireland economy, it is recognised that a more flexible approach has become increasingly necessary when determining the types of economic development that are acceptable in particular locations.

- 4.8 There has been recent growth in office type industries, such as information technology and financial services, and although it is envisaged that this will largely continue to be concentrated within established city and town centres, a certain degree of flexibility is considered essential in order to facilitate job creation and to help attract incoming investment. Consequently, there is pressure for a number of high technology, knowledge driven enterprises, and a range of employment creating uses, such as light industry and Class B1 high technology office uses which may be compatible within an area allocated for general industrial development.
- 4.9 Class A2 Office development proposals will be assessed under Planning Policy Statement 5 'Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Development'.
- 4.10 The re-use of previously developed land has an important role to play not only in the supply of sites for economic development, but it can also to help to support the Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy, and assist with economic regeneration and physical renewal, helping to stimulate enterprise in the most disadvantaged areas in order to tackle long-term unemployment and issues of employability.
- 4.11 There is an increased emphasis on the sustainability benefits that arise from mixed use developments, particularly where employment use forms part of the overall land use mix. Furthermore, modern economic development often comprises low-impact industry<sup>3</sup>, which can be carried on in residential areas without causing unacceptable disturbance and adverse impact on residential amenity.
- 4.12 It is important that major mixed use sites involving industrial and business development that would attract a significant number of trips should be in locations that are well served by public transport, have adequate infrastructure and are properly integrated, in terms of land use and design, with surrounding areas.

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<sup>3</sup> Generally, use for any industrial purpose which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

### *Specific locational issues*

- 4.13 The RDS policy guidance in TRAN 3.1 seeks to “locate major distribution sites at the edge of urban areas, with good connections to the Key Transport Corridors within the RSTN”<sup>4</sup>. While in most cases storage and distribution use will be compatible with adjacent industrial or business development, there may be situations where there is a limited choice of sites available having the required accessibility which are also able to accommodate a high volume of goods vehicles. In these circumstances it may be necessary for development plans to identify and safeguard appropriate sites for storage and distribution purposes.
- 4.14 The RDS seeks to facilitate the clustering of engineering and high technology type industry/businesses such as those found in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and biotechnology, in order to contribute to the Region’s competitiveness by promoting innovation and improved business practices. Suitable locations identified by the RDS, include the centre of corridor towns, at established major business nodes within towns, or in ‘industrial office park’ developments at the edge of towns, normally as part of mixed use schemes, with preferred locations at road or road-rail nodes, and transport interchanges.
- 4.15 When considering hazardous substances, it is necessary to meet the requirements of the Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations 2000. These amend Planning (Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991 to require that in formulating its policies in a development plan, the Department shall have regard to the prevention of major-accident hazards and require that the written statement shall have regard to such matters.

### *Forecasting supply and monitoring trends*

- 4.16 The RDS also recognises that there is a need to safeguard the supply of land currently used for existing economic development from other competing uses in the urban area including housing, while taking into account whether it is still realistic to protect sites that have remained vacant or undeveloped for a considerable period of time. Within this context, location and accessibility are important factors that need to be considered, and these are often subject to changing circumstances. Therefore, it is clearly important that the overall quantity of land allocated for economic development purposes, as well as the location and type of economic development are closely monitored to ensure that there is a continuous supply of land for economic purposes. Such monitoring will help to identify any shortfalls that may arise.

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<sup>4</sup> Regional Strategic Transport Network – see RDS.

### *Concept plans, planning agreements and key site requirements*

- 4.17 When developing land for economic purposes, there is a growing awareness of the need to ensure quality development, in order to achieve the required environmental quality and design standards expected of modern economic development. This can often be secured through planning conditions on approvals. On major development sites, however, a concept master plan can illustrate how comprehensive development can be achieved with quality design. Planning agreements can also be used in circumstances where there are a number of land owners involved, or where there are other obstacles to achieving a sustainable form of development.
- 4.18 On larger sites, the use of key site requirements (KSRs) or development briefs in development plans can set out what is expected from developers in terms of design, layout and landscaping, and can also identify the main infrastructure requirements that developers will be expected to meet. However, the need for certain supplementary infrastructural works and/or mitigation measures necessary to facilitate the specific scale and form of development proposed may only be identified at planning application stage, for instance, as a result of an Environmental Impact Assessment or a Transport Assessment.

### **Preparing Development Plans**

- 4.19 In order to achieve the objectives of this PPS and in light of strategic guidance and current trends as set out above, the following matters should be assessed as appropriate in the course of preparing a development plan:-
- an estimate of the amount and the location of land required to ensure an ample supply of suitable land is available to meet economic development needs, taking into account various factors considered relevant and which include:-
    - past trends in take-up of land for economic development purpose;
    - the views of relevant Government Departments, District Councils and public bodies;
    - views expressed during the consultation process including those of local enterprise and business representative bodies;
    - views of relevant statutory consultees;
    - the strategic objective of the RDS to focus development within urban areas;
    - the potential contribution to regenerating existing urban areas, through economic development alone or as part of a mixed use approach;

- accessibility to all members of the community and in particular the most disadvantaged areas;
  - accessibility to the regional transportation network;
  - accessibility by a variety of transport modes;
  - any potential environmental impact;
  - the availability of adequate infrastructure;
  - the opportunity to avail of local resources and labour markets;
  - the prevailing suitability, in terms of location and accessibility, of existing economic development sites, both developed and undeveloped;
  - the potential for improvement to economic development sites; and
  - emerging guidance from the Inter-Departmental working group.
- the range of acceptable employment uses within designated areas for economic development, taking into account various factors including:-
    - the flexibility that is appropriate with regard to business uses, while taking into account the need to safeguard established city/town centres;
    - the benefits of promoting mixed use development where appropriate;
    - the need for specific land supply to accommodate storage and distribution uses;
    - opportunities for industry/business clusters; and
    - the appropriate balance of opportunity for office development.
- supporting action needed to assist in the delivery of economic development including:-
    - design guidance and environmental improvements;
    - infrastructure provision by developers; and
    - concept master plans and planning agreements.
- the need to constrain development of land in the vicinity of establishments where hazardous substances are or may be present;

- the new baseline position for further monitoring and review of the opportunities for economic development.

## **Plan Proposals**

4.21 In order to achieve the objectives of this PPS and other relevant strategic policy or guidance and in light of the assessment undertaken during the course of preparation, development plan proposals will accommodate those measures considered appropriate from the list outlined below:

### *Meeting Economic Development Needs*

- (a) designate/zone an ample supply of land available to meet identified economic development needs in a range of sites offering a choice of size and location, to accommodate a wide and flexible range of development opportunities;
- (b) include, as part of this land supply, the safeguarding of existing economic development land where it remains suitable for continuation or expansion of this use;
- (c) designate/zone where appropriate areas for mixed use development, to include residential and economic development use that also forms part of the land supply;
- (d) identify areas where Business Use Class B1(a) – office use – is acceptable;
- (e) reallocate for alternative use existing economic development sites, either developed or undeveloped, where the potential future use for economic development purposes is not considered realistic;

### *Acceptable Employment Uses*

- (f) restrict as appropriate the particular types of economic development use permissible within any designated/zoned site;
- (g) specify as appropriate the range of economic development uses acceptable in mixed use areas;
- (h) identify locations where either or both Business Use Class B1(a) and B1(c) is to be restricted;
- (i) where necessary, identify and safeguard sites specifically for storage and distribution use;
- (j) identify locations for clusters of high technology type industry/businesses such as those found in ICT and biotechnology;
- (k) provide specifically for the types of industry which although necessary may be detrimental to amenity or a potential source

of pollution, and ensure that development by such industries is separated from land uses which may be sensitive to their effects;

- (l) specify, as may be appropriate, where any particular type of economic development use is to be subject to size restriction;
- (m) take into account the siting of establishments where the hazardous substances are used or stored, and provide appropriate controls as may be necessary for the development of land within the vicinity of establishments where hazardous substances are, or may be, present;

#### *Supporting Actions*

- (n) provide guidance in terms of key design, layout and landscaping requirements of new or existing economic development sites through an appropriate combination of, design policies, key site requirements and supplementary guidance such as development briefs for larger sites;
- (o) specify key site requirements with regard to the main, but not necessarily all the infrastructure requirements that developers will be expected to meet on economic development sites. These may include access points, servicing arrangements and known physical and infrastructural constraints that need to be overcome. Infrastructure works may include roads, public transport provision, cycle routes and footways, water, sewerage and land drainage, and other services such as electricity, gas or telecommunications. Developers may be required to provide or contribute to the capital cost of works needed to facilitate their development proposals;
- (p) stipulate where appropriate a requirement for a concept master plan to facilitate comprehensive development; and
- (q) stipulate where planning agreements may be necessary to ensure quality development or to secure an appropriate mixture of uses.

## **Planning Policies**

**In exercise of its responsibility for development management in Northern Ireland the Department assesses development proposals against all planning policies and other material considerations that are relevant to it.**

**The planning policies of this Statement must therefore be read together and in conjunction with the relevant contents of the Department's development plans and other planning policy publications, including the Regional Development Strategy. The Department will also have regard to the contents of published supplementary planning guidance documents.**

**The following policies set out the main planning considerations that the Department will take into account in assessing proposals for economic development uses and for proposals affecting such development or land and sites allocated for such uses. Please note Policy PED 9 sets out general criteria that all such proposals will be expected to meet.**

**The provisions of these policies will prevail unless there are other overriding policy or material considerations which outweigh them and justify a contrary decision.**

# Policy PED 1

## Economic Development in Settlements

### Cities and Towns

#### *Class B1 Business Use*

A development proposal for a Class B1 business use will be permitted in a city or town centre (having regard to any specified provisions of a development plan) and in other locations that may be specified for such use in a development plan, such as a district or local centre.

In addition, a development proposal for a Class B1(b) use as a call centre or B1(c) use for research and development proposals will be permitted within an existing or proposed industrial/employment area. Class B1(a) office use will only be permitted in an industrial/employment area when specified in a development plan.

Elsewhere in cities and towns a development proposal for a Class B1 business use will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

- (a) there is no suitable site within the city or town centre or other location specified for such use in the development plan;
- (b) it is a firm rather than a speculative development proposal for business use; and
- (c) the proposal would make a substantial contribution to the economy of the urban area.

Where a development proposal for Class B1 business use satisfies the above criteria, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that an edge of town centre location is not available before a location elsewhere in the urban area is considered.

#### *Class B2 Light Industrial Use and Class B3 General Industrial Use*

A development proposal for a Class B2 light industrial use or Class B3 general industrial use will be permitted in an area specifically allocated for such purposes in a development plan or in an existing industrial / employment area provided it is of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location. Elsewhere in cities and towns such proposals will be determined on their individual merits.

#### *Class B4 Storage or Distribution Use*

A development proposal for a Class B4 storage or distribution use will be permitted in an area specifically allocated for such purposes in a development plan.

In addition a Class B4 development will also be permitted in an existing or proposed industrial/employment area where it can be demonstrated: that the proposal is compatible with the predominant industrial/employment use; it is of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location; and provided approval will not lead to a significant diminution in the industrial/employment resource both in the locality and the plan area generally. Elsewhere in cities and towns such proposals will be determined on their individual merits.

#### **Villages and Smaller Rural Settlements:**

##### ***Class B1 Business Use***

A development proposal for small-scale Class B1 business use will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: the nature and design of the proposal are appropriate to the character of the settlement and it is centrally located. In addition, for small settlements (with a population less than 2,250) the floorspace for any individual proposal is limited to a maximum of 200 sq.m. gross.

##### ***Class B2 Light Industrial Use and Class B3 General Industrial Use***

A development proposal for a Class B2 light industrial use or Class B3 general industrial use will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the scale, nature and design of the proposal are appropriate to the character of the settlement and it is not incompatible with any nearby residential use.

##### ***Class B4 Storage or Distribution Use***

A development proposal for a Class B4 storage or distribution use will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the scale, nature and design of the proposal are appropriate to the character of the settlement and it is not incompatible with any nearby residential use.

#### **Extensions**

A development proposal to extend an existing economic development use or premises within settlements will be determined on its individual merits having regard to Policy PED9.

## Justification and Amplification

- 5.1 The RDS indicates that the urban hubs/clusters of the region will be the main focus for employment and services. The objective is to capitalise on development opportunities provided by the concentration of people and goods combined with available infrastructure and the

clustering of a range of business services, including the professional, technical and financial services essential to economic development.

- 5.2 The Department will ensure through development plans that an ample supply of land is available for economic development purposes in a wide range of suitable sites within larger settlements to meet the future demands of industrial, business, storage and distribution enterprises.
- 5.3 Within small rural settlements, the Department will not normally zone land for economic development purposes in the interests of flexibility. Favourable consideration will be given to applications for industrial, business and storage or distribution uses on unzoned land included within the settlement limit, provided the proposal is of a scale, nature and design appropriate to the character of the settlement involved and it meets the normal planning criteria for this type of development
- 5.4 Decisions on the reallocation of land zoned but undeveloped for industrial, business, storage and distribution purposes, when necessary, will be made through the development plan process.
- 5.5 City and town centres will continue to be the primary focus for expanding service employment, as advocated by the RDS. The Department, however, also recognises that some Class B1 development centred on activities such as communications and computer software design are clearly closely related to high technology knowledge-driven light industrial uses, and that there are economic and other benefits in grouping such uses in industrial/business parks.
- 5.6 Where an area for an industrial/business park is identified in a development plan, the plan will specify the criteria under which Class B1(a) development may be acceptable.
- 5.7 The development plan may also, on occasion, specify areas in larger settlements outside town centres or business parks where Class B1 uses will be acceptable.
- 5.8 Exceptionally where there is a definite rather than a speculative proposal for a new Class B1 office development which would make a substantial contribution to the economy of a particular town and no suitable site exists within the existing town centre, a business park or other area identified in a development plan as suitable for such development, consideration may be given to an alternative site within the urban area. A location on the periphery of the existing central area must be considered first, as the Department considers that such a location will have the least detrimental impact on town centre business functions. For any site to be found acceptable it will need to be compatible with existing land uses in the immediate area and meet normal planning and environmental standards.

## **Policy PED 2**

### **Economic Development in the Countryside**

**Proposals for economic development uses in the countryside will be permitted in accordance with the provisions of the following policies:**

- **The Expansion of an Established Economic Development Use – Policy PED 3**
- **The Redevelopment of an Established Economic Development Use – Policy PED 4**
- **Major Industrial Development – Policy PED 5**
- **Small Rural Projects – Policy PED 6**

**Economic development associated with farm diversification schemes and proposals involving the re-use of rural buildings will be assessed under the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 21 ‘Sustainable Development in the Countryside’.**

**All other proposals for economic development in the countryside will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.**

#### **Justification and Amplification**

- 5.9 The Department is committed to facilitating opportunities for economic development and diversification in the countryside while maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the quality of the rural environment for local people and visitors. A pleasant and attractive countryside is central to its economic prosperity and healthy economic activity in rural areas facilitates investment to sustain and enhance the countryside’s appeal and meet the needs of the rural community.
- 5.10 To assist the achievement of a sustainable rural economy, the Department’s general approach is that development in the countryside should benefit economic activity while protecting or enhancing the environment. Farm diversification, the re-use of rural buildings and appropriate redevelopment and expansion proposals for industrial and business purposes offer the greatest scope for sustainable economic development in the countryside. Such proposals may, on occasion, involve the construction of new buildings. However, there is a need, in the interests of rural amenity and wider sustainability objectives, to restrict the level of new building for economic development purposes outside settlements. In general, new buildings for such uses in the open countryside will be strictly controlled, although it is recognised that some major industrial proposals may require a countryside location and that some small-scale economic development projects may be permissible outside villages or smaller rural settlements.

- 5.11 Development proposals relating to large scale storage and distribution use will, in general, be more tightly controlled in the countryside than proposals for other economic development uses. It is considered that such proposals are usually more difficult to absorb into the countryside without detrimental impact on rural amenity and their capacity for generating employment is generally less than other uses.

## **Policy PED 3**

### **Expansion of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside**

The expansion of an established economic development use in the countryside will be permitted where the scale and nature of the proposal does not harm the rural character or appearance of the local area and there is no major increase in the site area of the enterprise.

Proposals for expansion will normally be expected to be accommodated through the reuse or extension of existing buildings on site. Where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, new buildings may be approved provided they are in proportion to the existing building(s) and will integrate as part of the overall development.

Any extension or new building should respect the scale, design and materials of the original building(s) on the site and any historic or architectural interest the original property may have.

A proposal for the major expansion of an existing industrial enterprise that would not meet the above policy provisions will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated that:

- relocation of the enterprise is not possible for particular operational or employment reasons;
- the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy; and
- the development would not undermine rural character.

In all cases, measures to aid integration into the landscape will be required for both the extension and the existing site.

#### **Justification and Amplification**

5.12 There are already many industrial and business enterprises located in rural areas. Some are long established, others normally small-scale, have been granted planning permission to operate in disused rural buildings. Many of these enterprises will over time need to expand and/or diversify. While such expansion is desirable for job creation, it can radically change the nature of the enterprise and its impact on the local environment. It is therefore important to weigh carefully the advantages to the rural economy of job creation or an improved industrial/business facility against the potential for an adverse impact on the rural environment.

5.13 Where proposals for expansion of an industrial or business enterprise in the countryside are considered inappropriate, planning permission will generally be refused. In those circumstances, the Department

would normally recommend relocation of the enterprise to a nearby settlement. Exceptionally, where it is accepted that relocation of an existing industrial enterprise is not possible for particular operational or employment reasons, such expansion may be permitted.

- 5.14 In all cases where permission for major expansion is granted, the Department will require measures to be taken to ameliorate the impact, not only of the extension but also of the existing enterprise, on the local environment. Such measures will normally be considered essential to the grant of planning permission. Where necessary, planning agreements may be used to secure environmental improvements. Conditions will also be imposed to ensure there is adequate landscaping, parking and servicing provision.

## **Policy PED 4**

### **Redevelopment of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside**

A proposal for the redevelopment of an established economic development use in the countryside for industrial or business purposes (or a *sui generis* employment use) will be permitted where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria can be met:

- (a) the scale and nature of the proposal does not harm the rural character or appearance of the local area and there is only a proportionate increase in the site area;
- (b) there would be environmental benefits as a result of the redevelopment;
- (c) the redevelopment scheme deals comprehensively with the full extent of the existing site or in the case of partial redevelopment addresses the implications for the remainder of the site; and
- (d) the overall visual impact of replacement buildings is not significantly greater than that of the buildings to be replaced.

The redevelopment of an established storage or distribution site for continuing storage or distribution use will also be permitted subject to the above criteria. However, the redevelopment of an established industrial or business site for storage or distribution purposes will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

On occasion, proposals may come forward for the alternative use of economic development sites in the countryside. Proposals for the redevelopment of sites for tourism, outdoor sport and recreation or local community facilities will be viewed sympathetically where all the above criteria can be met and where the proposal does not involve land forming all or part of an existing industrial estate.

Redevelopment proposals involving retailing will, however, not be permitted.

Exceptionally, proposals for social and affordable housing may be permitted on former industrial sites that cannot realistically be redeveloped for industry, provided they meet the policy provisions of PPS 21.

#### **Justification and Amplification**

- 5.15 The Northern Ireland countryside contains some major developed sites presently or formerly in industrial or business use. Whether they are redundant or in continuing use, the complete or partial redevelopment of these sites may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement

and the promotion of job creation without adding to their impact on the amenity of the countryside.

- 5.16 The design and layout of new development will need to be considered as well as its footprint. The location of the new buildings should be decided having regard to the character of the area, the main features of the landscape and the need to integrate the new development with its surroundings.
- 5.17 Where proposals involve partial redevelopment, applicants will be required to address the potential impact on the remainder of the site.
- 5.18 The Department will not normally grant planning permission for the redevelopment of existing industrial or business uses in the countryside for storage/distribution use, partly because of the generally greater impact on rural amenity which would result and partly because the employment normally generated by storage/distribution use of a site is relatively less significant than its use for industrial or business purposes. An exception will however be permitted for small-scale proposals for storage and distribution use on part of an existing site used for industrial or business use or for redevelopment schemes involving an ancillary element of storage or distribution use provided in both cases the general policy criteria can be met. Redevelopment proposals for small-scale storage and distribution using existing buildings on farms will be assessed under the provisions of CTY 11 – Farm Diversification in Planning Policy Statement 21 ‘Sustainable Development in the Countryside’.
- 5.19 The redevelopment of existing economic development sites in the countryside for other uses considered appropriate in a rural area, such as a tourism or recreation facility, will be permitted where the proposal meets the above criteria and approval would not mean the loss of land currently in use as an industrial estate. This flexibility for redevelopment proposals other than for economic development will only apply to a limited range of uses.

## **Policy PED 5**

### **Major Industrial Development in the Countryside**

**A major industrial proposal which makes a significant contribution to the regional economy will be permitted in the countryside where it is demonstrated that the proposal due to its size or site specific requirements needs a countryside location.**

**Such proposals will be assessed taking account of:**

- (a) the long-term sustainable economic benefits;**
- (b) the availability of alternative sites; and**
- (c) the environmental or transport impacts.**

**Where an industrial development proposal is judged acceptable in principle in the countryside under the above, an edge of town location will be favoured over a location elsewhere in the rural area.**

#### **Justification and Amplification**

- 5.20 While most industrial development is generally best located within settlements the Department recognises that certain industrial projects, because of their size or specific site requirements, may require to be located in the countryside.
- 5.21 Developers will need to demonstrate that there is an overriding reason for such a development in the countryside in the interest of the Region as a whole and that a thorough exploration of alternatives, including urban, and edge of urban sites, has been made and these are unsuitable. It will be the responsibility of the developer to explore all environmental impacts, both local and of wider consequence. The Department will consider not only the economic needs and benefits but also the wider long-term environmental effects of the proposal. This will include consideration of the accessibility of the proposal by different modes of transport and may entail the submission of a Transport Assessment and associated Travel Plan. Major projects are likely to be subject to formal environmental assessment under the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 (see Para 5.40).
- 5.22 Where such a proposal is justified in principle, the Department will expect the design of any buildings and associated development infrastructure to be of the highest standard. It should be accompanied by measures to assist integration of the proposal into the landscape and help promote biodiversity.
- 5.23 The Department will not normally grant permission for existing urban-based enterprises seeking relocation in the countryside.

5.24 In addition to the provisions of this policy major industrial development in the countryside will be acceptable on any site zoned for such purposes in a development plan.

## **Policy PED 6**

### **Small Rural Projects**

**A firm proposal to develop a small community enterprise park/centre or a small rural industrial enterprise on land outside a village or smaller rural settlement will be permitted where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:**

- (a) there is no suitable site within the settlement;**
- (b) the proposal would benefit the local economy or contribute to community regeneration; and**
- (c) the development is clearly associated with the settlement, but will not dominate it, adversely affect landscape setting or otherwise contribute to urban sprawl.**

**In assessing the acceptability of sites, preference will be given to sites in the following order:**

- (1) land adjacent to the existing settlement limit, subject to amenity and environmental considerations;**
- (2) a site close to the settlement limit which currently contains buildings or where the site is already in a degraded or derelict state and there is an opportunity to improve the environment; and**
- (3) an undeveloped site in close proximity to the settlement where the development could be visually integrated into the landscape.**

**Where an economic development proposal is permitted under this policy, any subsequent proposal should preferably be sited to cluster or visually link to this, subject to amenity and environmental considerations.**

**Storage or distribution uses will only be permitted where these are clearly ancillary to a proposal for a community enterprise park/centre or an industrial use.**

#### **Justification and Amplification**

5.25 It is the Department's policy to facilitate the development of new industrial and business enterprises in appropriate locations to diversify the rural economy. It is important that firm proposals for small rural projects are not blocked due to a lack of suitable land within existing settlements. The nature of a small industry may also be such as to require some physical separation from the built up area because of potential nuisance, for instance noise or smell. This policy allows for a flexible approach to ensure adequate provision is made where firm proposals exist for a small rural enterprise that is associated with a village or smaller rural settlement but cannot be accommodated within the settlement.

- 5.26 To allow informed consideration all applications made under this policy will be expected to be accompanied with the following information:
- sufficient evidence to indicate how realistic the particular proposal is and what sources of finance are available (including any grant aid) to sustain the project.
  - an assessment of the likely contribution the enterprise will make to the local economy and information on the level of community support.
  - detailed information of an exhaustive search to illustrate that there is no reasonable prospect of securing a suitable site within the limits of the particular settlement.
  - justification for the particular site chosen and illustrative details of the proposed design and site layout.
- 5.27 The Department would stress that the flexibility allowed for under this policy only relates to firm proposals for acceptable small-scale rural enterprises incorporating appropriate economic development uses, in order to protect the setting of rural settlements and provide for sustainable development. The grant of planning permission will not in itself allow for inappropriate alternative uses if an approved scheme for some reason does not go ahead. In addition, the Department will consider in each case whether an approval should be accompanied by a condition limiting the range of uses within the approved site.

## **Policy PED 7**

### **Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses**

#### **Zoned Land in all Locations**

Development that would result in the loss of land or buildings zoned for economic development use in a development plan (either existing areas or new allocations) to other uses will not be permitted, unless the zoned land has been substantially developed for alternative uses.

An exception will be permitted for the development of a *sui generis* employment use within an existing or proposed industrial/employment area where it can be demonstrated that: the proposal is compatible with the predominant industrial use; it is of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location; and provided approval will not lead to a significant diminution of the industrial/employment land resource in the locality and the plan area generally. Retailing or commercial leisure development will not be permitted except where justified as acceptable ancillary development.

#### **Unzoned Land in Settlements**

On unzoned land a development proposal that would result in the loss of an existing Class B2, B3 or B4 use, or land last used for these purposes, will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that:

- (a) redevelopment for a Class B1 business use or other suitable employment use would make a significant contribution to the local economy; or
- (b) the proposal is a specific mixed-use regeneration initiative which contains a significant element of economic development use and may also include residential or community use, and which will bring substantial community benefits that outweigh the loss of land for economic development use; or
- (c) the proposal is for the development of a compatible *sui generis* employment use of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location; or
- (d) the present use has a significant adverse impact on the character or amenities of the surrounding area; or
- (e) the site is unsuitable for modern industrial, storage or distribution purposes; or
- (f) an alternative use would secure the long-term future of a building or buildings of architectural or historical interest or importance, whether statutorily listed or not; or
- (g) there is a firm proposal to replicate existing economic benefits on an alternative site in the vicinity.

**A development proposal for the re- use or redevelopment of an existing Class B1 business use on unzoned land will be determined on its merits.**

**Unzoned Land in the Countryside**

**A development proposal for the re- use or redevelopment of an economic development use or site on unzoned land in the countryside will be assessed under Policy PED 4.**

**Justification and Amplification**

- 5.28 It is important that economic development land and buildings which are well-located and suited to such purposes are retained and only exceptionally will the Department consider the loss of such land and buildings to other uses. The Department is keen to support the diversity of the local economy and the retention of existing sites for economic development is often necessary to achieve this aim.
- 5.29 The retention of economic development land in urban locations and elsewhere can not only make a substantial contribution to the renewal and revitalisation of towns but can also provide employment opportunities accessible to large sections of the urban population and the rural hinterland. The existence of redundant business premises and derelict industrial land can be an important resource for the creation of new job opportunities in areas of high unemployment, particularly small businesses, and can help reduce the demand for greenfield sites.
- 5.30 Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving the loss of land zoned for economic development use, either existing or proposed, in a development plan to other uses. Any decision to reallocate such zoned land to other uses where necessary will be carried out as part of the development plan process.
- 5.31 An exception may be made for a proposal for a *sui generis* employment use compatible with the existing or proposed economic development use e.g. a builders' supplies merchant or a waste management facility provided a sufficient supply of land for economic development use remains in the locality and the plan area generally.
- 5.32 Planning permission will not normally be granted for the change of use, or the redevelopment for other uses, of unzoned sites or premises in settlements used or last used for industrial and storage or distribution purposes, except in the circumstances outlined in the policy above. For instance, the redevelopment of an existing industrial or storage and distribution site with a mixed use scheme, as a specific regeneration initiative to meet the needs of a particular locality and providing a significant element of employment or community uses are integrated into the overall development scheme.

## **Policy PED 8**

### **Development incompatible with Economic Development Uses**

**A proposal for development in the vicinity of an existing or approved economic development use that would be incompatible with this use or that would prejudice its future operation will be refused.**

#### **Justification and Amplification**

- 5.33 Some proposed developments may be incompatible with economic development enterprises already operating in the vicinity. For example, certain types of industrial use would be incompatible with existing industrial undertakings requiring a particularly contaminant free environment [such as life sciences, food processing and research and development sectors]. In other cases, new development, such as housing, could prejudice the continued existence of a particular economic development use. Such cases can arise where the particular processes being carried out have a tendency to cause adverse effects of some kind on adjacent land, even when all reasonable remedial measures have been taken by the operator.
- 5.34 Where it is made known to the planning authority that development is proposed, particularly general industrial uses, in the locality of an existing industry requiring a contaminant free environment, special attention will be paid to the needs of the existing industry for a clean/sterile environment in determining the proposal.
- 5.35 The requirements of non-planning legislation, for example those relating to public health and environmental pollution, may result in costly new requirements and restrictions being imposed on such businesses as a consequence of new neighbouring development. In such circumstances, the Department may refuse planning permission for new development in order to avoid jeopardising employment in the existing enterprise.

## **Policy PED 9**

### **General Criteria for Economic Development**

A proposal for economic development use, in addition to the other policy provisions of this Statement, will be required to meet all the following criteria:

- (a) it is compatible with surrounding land uses;
- (b) it does not harm the amenities of nearby residents;
- (c) it does not adversely affect features of the natural or built heritage;
- (d) it is not located in an area at flood risk and will not cause or exacerbate flooding;
- (e) it does not create a noise nuisance;
- (f) it is capable of dealing satisfactorily with any emission or effluent;
- (g) the existing road network can safely handle any extra vehicular traffic the proposal will generate or suitable developer led improvements are proposed to overcome any road problems identified;
- (h) adequate access arrangements, parking and manoeuvring areas are provided;
- (i) a movement pattern is provided that, insofar as possible, supports walking and cycling, meets the needs of people whose mobility is impaired, respects existing public rights of way and provides adequate and convenient access to public transport;
- (j) the site layout, building design, associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements are of high quality and assist the promotion of sustainability and biodiversity;
- (k) appropriate boundary treatment and means of enclosure are provided and any areas of outside storage proposed are adequately screened from public view;
- (l) is designed to deter crime and promote personal safety; and
- (m) in the case of proposals in the countryside, there are satisfactory measures to assist integration into the landscape.

#### **Justification and Amplification**

5.36 In making provision for economic development, and in considering proposals, the Department will seek to minimise adverse effects on the amenities of adjacent properties, particularly dwellings, and on natural and built heritage resources. Particular care will be taken to safeguard local, national and international natural heritage designations. The Department will expect development proposals affecting features and areas of the historic environment, such as archaeological sites, listed buildings and conservation areas, to protect and, where possible, enhance their character. The Department's policies for nature conservation and the built heritage are set out in Planning Policy Statement 2 'Planning and Nature Conservation' and Planning Policy

Statement 6 'Planning, Archaeology and the Built Environment' respectively.

- 5.37 Concern for environmental issues in general in relation to economic development is not only important in itself but it can make sound economic sense. Good design, for example, is as important for industrial and business development as for other forms of development. Attractive environments are known to attract people and investment. It is not just about appearance and how a development relates to adjoining buildings and spaces. It also encompasses a commitment to energy conservation and waste management, and careful attention to the quality of the surrounding landscape. Well-designed buildings and sites are not only better for the wider environment but can make economic sense by increasing job satisfaction and minimising running costs. The aim of development should be to create an attractive, healthy, safe and sustainable built environment which functions efficiently and enriches the experience of living for everyone in Northern Ireland.
- 5.38 Access to a proposed site, parking and servicing arrangements and the overall impact of a development on the local road network will all be carefully considered by the Department in assessing economic development proposals. For major developments a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan may be required. The Department will seek to ensure that the development proposed will not lead to increased congestion on the public road network and that the location chosen is also accessible to walking, cycling and public transport networks.

#### *Security from Crime*

- 5.39 The design of new developments should seek to provide a feeling of security and a sense of vitality in all parts of the layout. 'Secured by Design' is a UK project for promoting the principles of designing out crime from the built environment. Developers and their professional advisors should take account of these principles in preparing schemes. The Police Service of Northern Ireland has specifically trained officers who can advise on Crime Prevention and how to Design Out Crime. Contact your local Crime Prevention Officer or visit the police web-site [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk) for more information.

#### *Environmental Impact Assessment*

- 5.40 Environmental assessment is the process by which information about the likely environmental effects of certain major projects is collected, assessed and taken into account by the Department-in deciding whether planning permission should be granted. Major industrial and business development proposals are among those most likely to be

affected by the requirement to undertake environmental assessment. The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 set out the types of projects where an Environmental Statement will be required to assess the likely environmental effects of the proposal and properly consider any mitigating factors.

### *Hazardous Substances*

- 5.41 In addition to planning permission some industrial developments may also require consent under the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993, as amended by The Planning (Control of Major-Accident Hazards) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. This legislation allows the Department to consider whether the proposed storage or use of a significant quantity of a hazardous substance is appropriate in a particular location, having regard to the risks arising to persons in the surrounding area and the wider implications for the community. Consent is also required where a hazardous substance is introduced onto a site, or used differently within it, without there being any associated development requiring planning permission. Detailed guidance on these matters is currently contained in Development Control Advice Note 12 – Planning Controls for Hazardous Substances, published by the Department in May 2000.

## Annex A - Homeworking

- A1 Many small businesses are started by people working in their own homes, and technological innovations are likely to increase the incidence of homeworking. This will be particularly important in rural areas where modern communications permit businesses to be located without any major disadvantage.
- A2 Homeworking does not necessarily require planning permission. Permission is not normally required where the use of part of a dwellinghouse for business purposes does not change the overall character of the property's use as a single dwelling, for example, the use by a householder of a room as an office or the provision of a childminding service.
- A3 With regard to this latter example, the Department considers that persons who wish to use their homes for childminding will not normally require planning permission where the number of children does not exceed six. This is based on the maximum number of children between the ages of 0-12 years (including their own children) that childminders registered by Health & Social Services can care for.
- A4 Those considering working from home are advised to seek the advice of the Department at an early stage. Homeworking is likely to be ancillary to the residential use if:
- work is carried out primarily by persons living in the residential unit;
  - the business use is clearly secondary to the main use of the property as a dwelling house;
  - the use is carried out totally within the building;
  - there will be no loss of amenity for neighbouring residents, for example, from noise, advertising, impact on visual amenity or traffic generation; and
  - the use is not one which by its nature would attract more than occasional visitors.
- A5 Where the business activity increases and the non-residential use of the property ceases to be ancillary to its use as a single dwelling, a material change of use for which planning permission is required is likely to have taken place. The likelihood of there having been such a material change of use may be indicated where the following have occurred:
- a significant alteration to the appearance of the dwelling;
  - a significant increase in the volume of visitors or traffic;
  - a significant increase in noise, fumes or smell;
  - the installation of special machinery or equipment not normally found in a dwelling; and
  - the laying out of rooms in such a way that they could not easily revert to residential use at the end of the working day.





