

Promoting the Visitor and Rural Economy

- 7.73 Encouraging the visitor economy through enhanced visitor attractions will benefit the local economy by broadening its economic base, providing additional employment and improving the image of the borough. Much of the borough accommodates rural activity, particularly the upland areas, and it is important that this is supported to maintain this important economy.

Policy PR10 – Promoting the Visitor and Rural Economy

The Council will encourage the visitor economy by promoting enhanced visitor attractions that will benefit the local economy by broadening its economic base, providing additional employment and improving the image of the borough.

To achieve this the Council will support:

- a. Proposals that improve the visitor economy and resist those that could adversely affect it;
- b. The provision of built leisure, tourism, cultural facilities and overnight accommodation subject to the following sequential approach:
 - i. Town centres if sites are available; or
 - ii. Areas where a need can be demonstrated (i.e. for business visitors and / or close to tourism attractions) in support of existing and new tourism opportunities within the borough and economic growth areas such as Atom Valley.
- c. Camping sites and touring and static caravan sites provided that they are appropriately located and do not have an adverse effect on the appearance or character of the countryside; and
- d. Outdoor sport and water-based recreation facilities appropriate to the location.

The visitor economy also forms a key element of the Borough's rural economy. In promoting the rural economy, we will support proposals that:

- e. Enhance the South Pennine Moors landscape;
- f. Enhance the role of key rural settlements, facilities for tourism, recreation and associated products and services for local communities and visitors
- g. Improve the recreational and tourist value of the Rochdale Canal, Hollingworth Lake, the Roch Valley corridor, Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway and other strategic tourist and recreational routes and sites;
- h. Support agriculture and other appropriate activities which help to sustain economic activity whilst maintaining and improving the appearance and rural character of the borough's countryside;
- i. Re-use redundant farm buildings and mills, and derelict, underused or neglected land for new rural business activity which contribute to a sustainable low carbon economy (for example overnight accommodation, creative, digital and emerging media industries, renewable energy, and other environmental technologies); and

- j. Do not result in the loss of agricultural land, particularly the best (Grade 3a and above), unless there is an overriding strategic need for development and no appropriate land exists elsewhere.

Places for Everyone Links:

Policy JP-P3 Cultural Facilities

Reasoned Justification

- 7.17 The borough has a lot to offer to visitors. It has good access to the South Pennines and Manchester city centre, attractive countryside, a rich heritage and many opportunities to attract more visitors.
- 7.74 The current and potential visitor economy in the borough includes both facilities and attractions within the urban area and outside the urban area in more rural locations such as Hollingworth Lake and the South Pennines Moors. Although some of the borough's assets are well known there are others which could benefit from further development and promotion.
- 7.75 Supporting the growth of the visitor economy is important to attract visitors and investment as well as improving the overall image and perception of the borough. In accommodating such growth, it is important that this is focussed to the right locations and also has regard to the local area and landscape, particularly as such attractions and opportunities are often in sensitive locations.
- 7.76 There is a strong link between the visitor economy and the wider rural economy. The rural landscapes and communities of the borough cover approximately two thirds of its total land area. These rural areas support a wide range of economic activities and provide key services and infrastructure for the borough and Greater Manchester. This includes agriculture, forestry, minerals, waste, energy, water, tourism and recreation.
- 7.77 The rural areas of Rochdale are varied and diverse in character. They include both the uplands of the South Pennines (in the north) and the open pasture land and river valleys of the Urban Mersey Basin (in the south). Within the upland areas the population is small and scattered, with the agriculture mainly sheep grazing.
- 7.78 National guidance sets our general advice in terms of development associated with the rural economy. Locally, the rural economy is defined very much by the landscape, agricultural and visitor assets of the borough. As with the visitor economy, the growth of this sector is encouraged, having regard to the sensitive nature of certain landscapes and locations.