

SGRetail 2: Retail development in the countryside

We will approve retail developments in the countryside, subject to other policies, where:

- 1) It is designed as a substantive part of a new tourist attraction; OR**
- 2) It is ancillary to an existing tourist attraction or recreation facility; OR**
- 3) It is the expansion or intensification of an existing retail use in the countryside, including an established farm shop, as long as the increased scale of development is appropriate to the rural character of the area.**

In any of the cases above, the applicant must also demonstrate that:

- a) reasonable account has been taken of the possibility either of using disused/derelict buildings or of locating a new building on brownfield land; AND**
- b) there would be no detrimental impact on the vitality or viability of town centres as demonstrated by a retail impact assessment.**

Reasoned justification

The aim of this policy is to promote the rural economy, and support existing businesses through diversification.

A key issue identified in the finalised Structure Plan is the importance of promoting retail services throughout the region to guarantee the vitality and viability of our town centres, while creating opportunities for growth in the economy. Aberdeenshire is largely a rural area, and there is opportunity to broaden the economy of rural Aberdeenshire by promoting small-scale retail developments in the countryside that will not have a significant impact on existing retail centres. Supporting proposals for larger “destination” retailing also has an important role to play in sustaining the rural economy of Aberdeenshire.

Appropriate rural character will be judged, amongst other things, in terms of transport, accessibility and landscape.

“Tourist attractions” are taken to be specific places or points of visitor interest, including historic sites and monuments (castles, historic houses, concentrations of archaeological sites etc.), and specific natural heritage features (such as waterfalls or viewpoints). For the purposes of this policy they also include businesses that provide a range of activities for visitors (such as “outward bound” centres).

The erection of a farm shop in the countryside does not require planning permission if:

- 1) the majority of the produce sold is produced on-site or locally; and
- 2) the retail unit is ancillary to the existing use.

Once goods are imported to the location from elsewhere, this permitted development no longer applies and planning permission would be required for change of use to a shop.

Farm supply shops, where the substantive business is the sale of feedstock, will be treated as warehouse and distribution businesses, rather than retail businesses. It may be appropriate for these to sell other agriculture related goods in a “shop”, provided it remains a smaller part of the warehouse and distribution use.

“Farmers’ markets” are temporary in nature and would not usually require planning consent. Where a permanent “farmers’ market” is proposed, this policy would apply.