

# **Rural Development**

## **Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) adopted its Local Development Plan on the 10th December 2014, and its aim is to make the Development Plan system more relevant, inclusive and engaging to local communities.
- 1.2 This Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was prepared within the context of the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) to give clear practical guidance on how policies and proposals relating to rural enterprises and buildings in the countryside will be implemented. The LDP and SPG are material considerations in the determination of planning applications and appeals.
- 1.3 This Draft SPG will also provide clear guidance on the interpretation and implementation on LDP policy H5 - Adaptation and Re-use of rural buildings for residential use, and will on adoption supersede the content of the current adopted SPG - Adaptation and Re-Use of Rural Buildings for Residential Use.
- 1.4 This Draft SPG will also provide clear guidance on the interpretation and implementation of LDP planning policies and TAN6 policies on:
  - Design Principles for the Conversion, Re-Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings
  - Rural Enterprise Dwellings
  - One Planet Wales Developments
- 1.5 In considering and preparing proposals, applicants and developers are strongly advised to contact the LPA at an early stage to establish the core requirements in relation to their proposals.

## **2. National and Local Policy**

- 2.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW, Edition 7:2014) and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities set out national planning policy.
- 2.2 PPW and TAN6 recognises the value of the rural economy as a way to provide local employment opportunities, increase local economic prosperity, minimise the need to travel for employment and facilitate diversification of the rural economy by accommodating the needs of both traditional rural industries and new enterprises (para 3.1.2 – (TAN) 6:2010). In this regard, national planning policy makes provision for appropriate new development to be undertaken in the open countryside, such as buildings associated with agriculture or forestry, the conversion and re-use of rural buildings, in addition to replacement or abandoned dwellings.
- 2.3 In the main however, national policy seeks to strictly control new residential development in the open countryside by reflecting the principles of sustainability and to promote climate resilience and protect the natural environment. This is then reflected within local planning policy through the LDP which seeks to provide a settlement framework and the delineation of development limits to prevent inappropriate development in rural areas.
- 2.4 The LDP allows the consideration for development in the countryside through a number of policies. These include; Replacement Dwellings (Policy H4), Adaptation and Re-Use of Rural Buildings for Residential Use (Policy H5), Renovation of Derelict

or Abandoned Dwellings (Policy H8), Farm Diversification (Policy EMP4). It is not the purpose of this SPG to repeat the content of the policies and their supporting paragraphs in its entirety, but to assist in their interpretation and their implementation.

### **New buildings in the open countryside**

- 2.5 For the purposes of interpreting the policies of the LDP the term ‘buildings in rural areas’ relate to structures in areas that are located outside the Development Limits of a settlement defined within Policy SP3: Sustainable Distribution – Settlement Framework of the LDP. Such areas are within the context of the LDP termed as open countryside as defined within the Glossary of Terms of the LDP. In this regard proposals for new residential developments in the open countryside will in accordance with the provisions of national policy be strictly controlled.

### **3. Adaptation and Re-use of rural buildings for residential use**

- 3.1 The LDP highlights a number of policies which would be considered in relation to proposals within the open countryside. Reference is drawn to Policy H5 of the LDP which considers proposals for the adaptation and Re-use of Rural Buildings for Residential Use. An SPG for the conversion of rural buildings to residential dwellings was adopted concurrent with the LDP, however it is considered that its content would be better reflected within this SPG. As a consequence this SPG supersedes the content of the ‘**Adaptation and Re-use of Rural Buildings for residential Use**’ SPG.

#### **H5 - Adaptation and Re-Use of Rural Buildings for Residential Use**

**Proposals for the conversion and re-use of buildings in rural areas outside the Development Limits of a defined settlement (Policy SP3) for residential purposes will only be permitted where:**

- a) The authority is satisfied that every reasonable endeavour has been made to secure an alternative business use and the application is supported by a statement of evidence to the Council’s satisfaction of appropriate efforts that have been undertaken to achieve this;**
- b) Any residential use would be a subordinate element associated with a wider scheme for business re-use; or**
- c) The residential use contributes to the provision of affordable housing to meet a genuine identified local need (as defined within the Glossary of Terms) and provided that:
  - i) The benefits of the initial affordability will be retained for all subsequent occupants;**
  - ii) It is of a scale compatible with an affordable dwelling and would be available to low or moderate income groups.****

**Proposals will also be required to demonstrate that the following criteria can be met:**

**d) The building is structurally sound, substantially intact and is of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed use without extensive alteration, extension or re- construction;**

**e) The building demonstrates and retains sufficient quality of architectural features and traditional materials with no significant loss of the character and integrity of the original structure.”**

3.2 The supporting paragraphs for Policy H5 provides sufficient guidance to indicate the requirements and criteria set within the policy, and applications should be considered on the merits of these principles.

3.3 With respect to the conversion of buildings, and criterion (d) the local authority will include conditions as part of any planning permission stating that the planning permission only relates to the refurbishment and rebuilding works detailed in the approved plans and the Method Statement, and does not extend to the rebuilding of the buildings in the event of collapse. Where any additional problems are identified as conversion work begins, an additional method statement must be submitted for approval in writing from the Local Planning Authority.

3.4 It is important to re-emphasise that the re-use and adaptation (including conversion) of an industrial, commercial, agricultural or other buildings in the open countryside to a residential use will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that every reasonable effort has been made to continue or establish a business/commercial use or community activity, as set out in criterion a).

### **Design Principles for the Conversion, Re-Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings**

3.5 In achieving good design for buildings in the countryside, there are some fundamental design principles which apply in relation to conversion, re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for residential use.

#### **Setting**

- Where an existing building has a clearly defined curtilage boundary (the area immediately surrounding a building and directly related to it), the curtilage used for future development should normally reflect the original boundary line, unless an extension to the curtilage is necessary to accommodate an acceptable rural business use.
- Where the existing building does not have a readily defined curtilage, the amount of land included as part of a curtilage should be kept to a minimum.
- Boundary treatments should be appropriate for the context of the area. Gates, walls or hedges which already form part of the traditional character of the countryside location, these should be incorporated into any scheme.
- Suitable new boundary treatments are likely to include native species hedges, dry stone walls and post and wire fencing. Boundary treatments more common to an urban area such as close board fencing, brick walls or concrete will not be appropriate within a rural setting.

- It is recognised that some rural businesses may require security fencing due to the nature of the business, but this should be of a type that has a minimal visual impact. Natural screening measures should be used to mitigate against the visual impact of security fencing. Palisade fencing or concrete post and panel fencing should be avoided.
- Where a building in the countryside is in residential use, the development of ancillary structures such as garden sheds, summerhouses, outbuildings or greenhouses may result in the domestication or urbanisation of the setting and will therefore be strictly controlled. The Council may remove permitted development rights (*the right to carry out limited forms of development without the need for planning permission*) through planning conditions where appropriate, as a means of ensuring that the setting is not adversely affected by uncontrolled development in the countryside. Only those structures that are ancillary to the residential use and can be accommodated without harm to the setting of the area will be permitted.
- If a proposal is for rural diversification, whilst the availability of public transport does not represent a prerequisite for diversification projects, it should be taken into account when considering the nature and scale of the proposal. Furthermore, the considerations of proposals will need to have regard to their location in a spatial context and should not wholly represent an isolated development.
- The type of use proposed should be suitable in amenity terms and should not adversely affect the character of the area by virtue of an unacceptable impact on visual amenity or an increase in pollution (for example noise, smell, light or traffic).

### **Scale**

- Where an extension to a building is proposed it should be subordinate to the existing building. Extensions should have regard to the scale, form and character of the existing building. If a building has already been extended, the impact of further extensions on the character and context of the area will need to be carefully considered.

### **Materials and Design**

- Many existing buildings in the countryside have characteristics that are worthy of protection and it is important that conversions, extensions and replacements respect the local context, both in terms of materials and design.
- The key approach for any proposal involving the re-use of buildings is that there should be the least amount of change possible to the external appearance. Where possible in conversion schemes, internal features of interest should also be retained.

### **Roofs**

- Original roofs should be retained and repaired with original materials wherever possible, unless an alternative roofing material would be better suited to the character of the building and its local context.
- Extensions should use the same roofing materials as the original building.

- For conversions, any alteration to the roof height or pitch should be avoided where this would adversely affect the skyline or the character of the building itself.
- Conversion schemes should not include dormer windows where these do not form part of the original building. If it is necessary for windows to be introduced in the roof, they should be limited in number and should be in the form of roof lights, preferably on the rear of the building and/or on the least visible elevation.

## **Walls**

- Extensions should be constructed from the same materials as the original building or where appropriate, a sympathetic alternative material may be acceptable.
- Where lime mortar has originally been used as part of the building construction any re-pointing or repair should use this material rather than cement.
- The re-use of salvaged material for extensions and replacements is encouraged where possible.
- If new buildings are proposed, they should be constructed from materials that reflect other buildings on the site and in the locality.

## **Windows and Doors**

- New or replacement windows and doors should have regard to original fenestration, and where appropriate, match the original design and materials
- In conversion schemes original openings should be retained and opportunities to re-open windows or doors that have been blocked up should be explored.
- If it is necessary to close an original opening, it will be appropriate to use a recessed panel to indicate where the original opening was located.

## **Heating and Ventilation**

- The design of any necessary heating or ventilation systems should respect the character of the existing building.
- Chimneystacks should only be included where there is an original internal chimneystack within the building.
- Any heating system flues and extractors should be designed to ensure that they are respectful to the original structure.
- Where vent tiles are used they should respect existing roof materials.
- Oil/gas tanks may be necessary to serve some properties in rural areas. These should be discreetly located so that the visual impact of any tanks is minimised.

## **Waste Treatment**

- The disposal of waste water and sewerage may pose a challenge in rural areas, but environmentally acceptable methods should be utilised wherever possible.
- If installations such as septic tanks or cesspits are necessary, these should be located where they have minimal visual impact through undergrounding or appropriate screening. It may be necessary in certain circumstances for such equipment or plant to be sited within existing buildings in order to reduce the visual impact.

## **Landscaping**

- It will not be appropriate for large areas of hard surfaces to be introduced where these did not exist previously. Any new hard surfaced areas, where they are considered to be acceptable, should be constructed in materials that are traditional for the area.

## **Parking and Access**

- The original access serving the buildings should be utilised unless this would not be appropriate in the interests of highway safety. New accesses or improvements to existing access will only be permitted where there is no detrimental impact on the character or biodiversity value of the area.
- The upgrading of access roads/tracks may have a detrimental impact on the landscape and therefore, if improvements to existing access roads are necessary, appropriate materials should be used that minimise the visual impact.
- Where access is from a country lane, entrance gates should be set back from the main road to ensure that entrances can be used as passing places where necessary.
- Garage parking should be accommodated within other existing buildings within the curtilage wherever possible.
- A new garage will only be acceptable if there are no suitable buildings within the curtilage that can be converted and where the visual impact of a new garage building can be minimised.
- Any new garage building should be single storey and at an appropriate scale for parking use. It should be constructed using materials that are appropriate to the local context.

## **Energy Efficiency**

- Where low and zero carbon energy technologies are proposed, consideration should be given to whether these can be incorporated in a manner that is suitable for the setting of the area.
- Where PV or solar thermal collection panels are used they should be located in discreet locations wherever possible and should avoid principal elevations. Evolving technologies, such as PV cladding that replicates the appearance of natural slate, means that the impact of any panels can be significantly reduced and will therefore be encouraged.

- It may be preferable for any micro-generation equipment to be sited on existing outbuildings or as freestanding units within the curtilage of the existing building.

### **Natural Heritage**

- Many buildings in the countryside provide a suitable habitat for a number of species including bats, barn owls and nesting birds. It will therefore be necessary for an ecological survey, including a protected species survey, to be undertaken prior to the submission of an application for the conversion or replacement of a building in the countryside. The submission of bat and/or barn owl surveys are required prior to determination of a planning application. If these surveys are required by the local planning authority and are not submitted, the application may be refused. Bat surveys should be carried out by a suitably qualified, licensed professional between the months of May and September. Further details can be obtained from the Council's ecologists. Reference should be made to the content of the Biodiversity SPG.
- Trees and hedgerows should be retained where possible as part of any development.



## 4. Rural Enterprise Dwellings

- 4.1 In line with Paragraph 4.3 of TAN6, one of the few circumstances in which new isolated residential development in the open countryside may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable rural enterprise workers to live at, or close to, their place of work.
- 4.2 In setting out policy on Rural Enterprise dwellings, TAN 6 identifies the following:
- **A new dwelling on an established rural enterprise.** – They should only be allowed where
    - There is a clearly established existing functional need;
    - The need relates to a full time worker;
    - The enterprise concerned has been established for at least three years, profitable for at least one of them and both the enterprise and the business need for the job, is currently financially sound, and has a clear prospect of remaining so
    - The functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling or by converting an existing suitable building already on the land holding comprising the enterprise, or any other existing accommodation in the locality which is suitable and available for occupation by the worker concerned.
    - Other normal planning requirements, for example siting and access, are satisfied.
  - **A second dwelling on an established farm which satisfies the criteria above**
  - **New dwellings on new enterprises. They should only be allowed where**
    - Clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the rural enterprise concerned (significant investment in new buildings and equipment is often a good indication of intentions);
    - Clear evidence that the new enterprise needs to be established at the proposed location and that it cannot be accommodated at another suitable site where a dwelling is likely to be available;
    - Clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;
    - There is a clearly established functional need and that need relates to a *full-time* worker, and does not relate to a part-time requirement;
    - The functional need could not be fulfilled by another dwelling or by converting an existing suitable building on the enterprise, or any other existing accommodation in the locality which is suitable and available for occupation by the workers concerned; and
    - Other normal planning requirements, for example siting and access, are satisfied.
- 4.3 In considering the requirements for a new rural enterprise dwelling, applicants must provide sufficient evidence to show that it accords with the criteria of TAN6 as highlighted above. Should the principle of a rural enterprise dwelling be established, consideration should be given to other material planning considerations. The impact of a new building in the countryside is more prominent, and so it is important to ensure a suitable location and a design that is in keeping with the character of the area.

4.4 The design, scale and future affordability of a development for a rural enterprise dwelling should consider its purpose as accommodation for essential workers and as such, applications should have regard to the following:

4.5 **Location** - It is important that rural developments do not result in the domestication or urbanisation of its countryside setting. In order to ensure that this does not occur, the following should be considered:

- Avoid open and/or isolated locations - It will not normally be acceptable for isolated new structures to be developed away from other buildings, as they are likely to be visually intrusive. Proposals should wherever possible have regard to the existing buildings and other units associated with the enterprise.
- Use the topography of the site to minimise its visual impact and screen it from public places,
- Use existing access roads to reduce the impact of concrete constructions in the countryside.

### **Design**

- Consider the characteristics of adjacent buildings,
- Large developments of an urban character should be avoided,
- Materials should be chosen to reflect rural character and its locational context,
- The building should be integrated with the landscape, the road scheme and natural vegetation,
- Hedges and trees on the site should be retained where possible and new landscaping introduced using native plants,
- Hard landscaping materials which are used should be appropriate to its countryside setting and the character of the buildings in the area.

### **Affordability**

- Priority should be given to the enterprise's needs, rather than the aspirations of the individuals concerned,
- With every new building, energy efficiency aspects should be considered carefully and materials that are already on the site should be re-used.

### **Affordable Housing Commuted Sums for Rural Enterprise Dwellings.**

4.6 In line with Policy AH1 of the LDP and the content of the Affordable Housing SPG, there will be no charge for any contribution towards affordable housing proposals from new rural enterprise dwellings. Any new dwelling is considered to represent an 'affordable' unit. This reflects the content of Paragraph 4.13 of TAN 6.

## **5. One Planet Development**

- 5.1 Paragraph 4.15 of TAN6 provides sufficient information relating to One Planet Developments, which look at providing Low Impact Development in a Welsh Context. Given the rural nature of the majority of the county, it is more likely that all One Planet Development would develop in open countryside locations, and outside the development limits of any settlements identified within the LDP.
- 5.2 In appraising a One Planet Development, applicants should consider the design principles for its development. It is imperative that the design of one dwelling, or a group of dwellings within a co-operative should integrate into the landscape and reflect the rural character. Proposals will be expected to utilise materials which are reflective of its rural and locational context alongside the other requirements of the One Planet objectives.

### **Affordable Housing Commuted Sums for One Planet Wales Developments**

- 5.3 In line with Policy AH1 of the LDP and the content of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance, there will be no charge for any contribution towards affordable housing proposals from One Planet Wales Development, as any new dwelling is considered to be of an 'affordable' status, and to bring in line with the content of Paragraph 4.13 of TAN 6.