

## Policy DP54: Rural workers housing

The erection of dwellings in the countryside for full time workers in agriculture, forestry, or other land-based rural businesses will be permitted provided that the applicant provides an appraisal that demonstrates that:

- The dwelling is required to satisfy a clearly established existing and long term functional need to live permanently at or within the immediate area of their work;
- The agricultural, forestry or land based use (excluding other elements) has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is currently financially sound, and has a clear prospect of remaining so;
- The need could not be fulfilled by another existing or recently disposed dwelling on the unit or any other accommodation or building capable of conversion in the area which is suitable and available for occupation by the worker concerned;
- The proposal is satisfactorily sited in relation to the agricultural or forestry unit and, wherever possible, is sited within a hamlet or existing group of buildings (in particular, that the need for a new vehicular access is, where practical, avoided); and

- The proposed external area of the dwelling does not exceed 150 square metres.

Where the need and location for a rural workers' dwelling has been accepted under the above criteria except for the economic viability of the unit, the council may permit temporary accommodation for up to three years in a caravan or mobile home, provided that there is clear evidence that the enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis with a firm intention and ability to develop it.

Planning permission will be granted only subject to a condition limiting occupation to the rural workers and their dependents. Where a second or further dwelling is permitted on a holding, a condition will be imposed on any unrestricted existing dwellings to similarly limit their occupation. The removal of an occupancy condition will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that there is no need for the dwelling on the unit or in the locality, nor is a need likely to arise in the foreseeable future, and that there has been a genuine and unsuccessful attempt to market the property for at least six months at a realistic price that reflects the agricultural tie.

### Justification

Farmers are encouraged to diversify their activities and supplement their income from enterprises other than normal food production. In some cases, this may lead to demand for on-site residential



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accommodation for non-agricultural enterprises (for example, where livestock are kept as part of a leisure or tourism-based enterprise). As with proposals for farm dwellings, both the need for such dwellings and the viability of the enterprise must be adequately demonstrated.

Within the Green Belt, new dwellings (other than replacement dwellings) outside settlement boundaries will not normally be permitted except for the purposes of agriculture or forestry and it would be inappropriate to make a further exception for other rural uses.

## Establishing need

Applicants will be required to submit an appraisal justifying an exception to the general policy of restraint. To ensure a high quality and impartial assessment, appraisals are best prepared by a member of the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants or other consultants demonstrating qualifications and experience in the subject area.

The appraisal should provide the following information:

- Existing accommodation on the unit and how it is occupied, the purpose of the new dwelling and how important it is for the operation of the unit;
- Whether the new building is necessary rather than convenient, such as must it be on site rather than in a nearby village;

- The justification for a particular site, when there may be other more appropriate sites in planning terms;
- The recent history of the unit, including recent severance and details of any dwellings on the unit that have been sold or converted for non-agricultural occupation;
- Where a new unit is to be formed, proof that the enterprise will be permanent and economically viable.

Applications are often received for dwellings associated with new enterprises. In certain instances, a financial test will be applied in order that further evidence of the genuineness of stated intentions can be provided. In such circumstances, where need is established temporary planning permission will normally be granted for a residential mobile home. Such temporary planning permissions will extend to two or three years depending on the circumstances of the enterprise. In order to receive consent for a permanent dwelling then the enterprise would have to be proven viable and assessed against the rural workers dwellings policy. In appropriate circumstances, a condition may be attached restricting the occupation of a dwelling until works necessary for the establishment of the enterprise have been completed.

## Design considerations

If the need for a dwelling is established, then it is important to ensure that any adverse effects relating its scale, design, size are addressed.



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Dwellings should therefore be well-related to existing buildings and where possible share an existing vehicular access. They should not exceed a size necessary to meet normal family requirements and accommodate minor ancillary office facilities.

Any proposals above 150 square metres gross external floor space would not normally be acceptable and would need to be fully justified. Proposals for the size, siting and landscaping of the curtilage should also ensure that the impact on the landscape is acceptable.

## Occupancy conditions

When granting permission under this policy, where appropriate, an occupancy condition will be imposed not only on the dwelling itself, but also on any existing dwellings on the unit which are under control of the applicant and do not have occupancy conditions. This will help to protect rural areas from inappropriate residential development pressures.

In recent years there has been a steady number of applications to remove occupancy conditions, while at the same time applications for new agricultural dwellings are still being received. The council requires that before an application for removal of an occupancy condition is approved it must be demonstrated that there is now no need for the dwelling on the unit, or in the locality, and that a genuine and

unsuccessful attempt has been made to sell the dwelling with the condition attached.

In determining such applications regard will be had to:

- Evidence of existing demand or lack of demand for agricultural workers within a radius of at least five miles from the property;
- Whether there are any vacant agricultural dwellings within this area and the number of recent applications in the locality for agricultural dwellings; and
- Evidence of efforts to dispose of the dwelling, whether it has been advertised, how frequently, for how long and whether the asking price reflected the occupancy condition.

