

Delivering strong and inclusive communities

CS17: Rural exceptions schemes

Housing schemes for 100% affordable housing to meet local needs within small rural communities will be supported where:

- a) the development meets an identified local need demonstrated by an up-to-date needs survey or other evidence;
- b) the development is supported or initiated by the parish council;
- c) the site search has followed a sequential approach with priority given to sites within any settlement boundary, sustainability principles, and avoiding sensitive locations;
- d) the scale of development is appropriate for the location;
- e) the affordable housing is provided in perpetuity.

Rural exceptions schemes will be acceptable adjacent to the settlement boundaries of Service Villages and Infill Villages and elsewhere adjacent to the main body of the settlement, but not in the Green Belt unless justified by very special circumstances.

This policy contributes towards achieving Priority Objective 8.

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Background

3.226 The affordability of housing, particularly within the rural areas is a key issue for many communities. This is exacerbated by the principles of sustainability and protection of the countryside which results in very few opportunities for new residential development in such areas. This policy sets out the mechanisms through which rural exceptions schemes for affordable housing could be delivered.



The Core Strategy approach

- 3.227 The council will use the rural exceptions approach to address local needs in rural communities. This permits the development of affordable housing in locations where market housing would not be acceptable, but only where it meets identified local needs, has local community support, alternative sites have been carefully assessed, and that the housing provided will be affordable in perpetuity.
- 3.228 When assessing potential sites, it is important to balance the need for affordable housing within a particular community with sustainability principles and other planning considerations, such as transport accessibility and access to jobs, facilities and services. This may mean that the site assessment may conclude that affordable housing is best provided in a higher order settlement to meet the needs of a surrounding rural area. Rural exceptions sites will be acceptable adjacent to settlement boundaries of Service Villages and Infill Villages, and elsewhere adjacent to the main body of the settlement. In all cases, development of locally sensitive sites will not be acceptable.
- 3.229 The Green Belt is a key policy constraint within the north of the district. Those rural communities living within the Green Belt are generally well related to higher order settlements, including Bristol, where affordable housing opportunities should be concentrated. Affordable housing proposals in the form of rural exceptions sites will not be acceptable in the Green Belt unless justified by very special circumstances.

How and where the policy will be delivered

- 3.230 New affordable housing will be specifically targeted to meet the needs of local communities.
- 3.231 In the case of rural exceptions sites the process will be bottom-up, championed by the local community to meet identified housing needs, and involving a site assessment process which considers wider issues than simply the merits of a particular development proposal.
- 3.232 Partnership working is key to the delivery of affordable housing, particularly the need for close liaison between housing and planning functions of North Somerset, Registered Providers, landowners and the local communities.

Monitoring and review

- 3.233 Assessment of permissions, allocations and completions of affordable housing.

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