

5. HOUSING

OBJECTIVES

- HG/a To ensure the provision of a range of housing types and sizes, including affordable housing, to meet the identified needs of all sectors of the community, including key workers.**
- HG/b To protect and enhance the environment by making best use of land and ensuring that new residential development, whether through new build or extensions and alterations to existing homes and buildings, is appropriate to its location.**

HOUSING DENSITY

POLICY HG/1 Housing Density

Residential developments will make best use of the site by achieving average net densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare unless there are exceptional local circumstances that require a different treatment. Higher average net densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare should be achieved in more sustainable locations close to a good range of existing or potential services and facilities and where there is, or there is potential for, Good Quality Public Transport.

- 5.1 Residential proposals should comply with the policies in the Development Principles Chapter and Design Supplementary Planning Document in order to achieve quality living environments. For new homes to meet the needs of current and future residents, it is important that they are designed to a high quality and create an attractive environment that functions well, where people want to live, which meets their needs, and which creates a sense of place where community identity can develop. Higher residential densities are required by PPG3 and Structure Plan Policy P5/3, in the interests of achieving more sustainable forms of development, and reducing use of greenfield land. There is no reason why higher densities should compromise the quality of new development.
- 5.2 In the urban extensions and the new town of Northstowe, higher densities should be sought, particularly close to the centres of those developments and in locations with access to High Quality Public Transport services, as set out in Area Action Plans.

HOUSING MIX

POLICY HG/2 Housing Mix

Residential developments will contain a mix of units providing accommodation in a range of types, sizes and affordability, to meet local needs.

Affordable housing should be of an appropriate mix to respond to identified needs at the time of the development, in accordance with HG/3.

Market properties should provide:

- 1. At least 50% of homes with 1 or 2 bedrooms; and**
- 2. Approximately 25% of homes with 3 bedrooms; and**
- 3. Approximately 25% of homes with 4 or more bedrooms;**

unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the District Council that the local circumstances of the particular settlement or location suggest a different mix would better meet local needs.

- 5.3 Nationally, the trend is towards smaller household size and PPG3 requires the needs of all households to be met. A key element in ensuring that new homes meet local needs is providing homes of the appropriate type, size and affordability.
- 5.4 There has been a strong trend in South Cambridgeshire in the recent past for large new homes, and in the period 1991-2001, 46% of new homes had four or more bedrooms. This is despite longstanding planning policies seeking a mix of house types, including smaller properties. This trend has limited the number of smaller new homes being built, particularly 1 and 2 bedroom properties (5% and 25% respectively), to meet more general needs. In an area of high house prices, this also has the effect of limiting the stock of cheaper market housing that is accessible to people on average salaries and those trying to get into the housing market.
- 5.5 The 2002 Housing Needs Survey assessed the mix of market housing required to meet local needs. It identified a need for 89% of all new market housing to be one and two bedroom properties. It also advised that no more new homes of four or more bedrooms are required to meet identified market needs for the period to 2007. This has regard to a combination of factors, including the size of property that people need as well as the type of property to which they aspire. The District Council considers that this provides a reasonable assessment of need. The study advises that provision of larger

sized accommodation would be likely to polarise the social structure of the district.

- 5.6 The District Council has therefore introduced specific targets for market housing mix to respond to the failure of the housing market to respond to need. In the interests of achieving balanced communities and also to provide choice and ensure viability of schemes, the targets do not go as far as the Housing Needs Survey suggests. However, they do seek a significant change from the recent past in the general mix in market housing schemes.
- 5.7 The general shift towards a greater mix in the sizes of homes and more smaller homes will sit alongside the need for increasing densities in residential schemes. A Supplementary Planning Document will be produced on housing mix.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

POLICY HG/3 Affordable Housing

Proposals for housing developments will only be permitted if they provide an agreed mix of affordable housing types, including for Key Workers, to meet local needs.

The amount of affordable housing sought will be approximately 50% of the dwellings for which planning permission may be given on all sites of two or more dwellings.

Account will be taken of any particular costs associated with the development and whether there are other planning objectives which need to be given priority. The occupation of such housing will be limited to people in housing need and must be available over the long term.

The appropriate mix in terms of housing tenures and house sizes of affordable housing within a development will be determined in response to identified needs and funding priorities at the time of the development.

In order to ensure sustainable communities, affordable housing will be distributed through the development in small groups or clusters.

Employment development proposals likely to have an impact on the demand for affordable housing will be expected to mitigate such impacts in accordance with Policy EM/2.

- 5.8 Affordable housing is defined in the Structure Plan as “housing that is in some way subsidised for people who cannot afford to buy or rent on the open

market". This definition is consistent with the District Council's views of affordable housing as an umbrella term for all types of subsidised housing to meet a variety of needs, including those of key workers. It includes within it:

- **Social rented housing:** housing provided at below market rents at levels controlled by the Housing Corporation, normally provided by Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations);
- **Intermediate housing:** housing for those who do not qualify for social rented housing, but whose incomes are such in relation to local housing costs that they are nonetheless not able to access market housing. This includes:
 - **Intermediate rented:** rents are not to exceed 30% of net median household incomes in South Cambridgeshire except where provided for specific groups of workers, where they should not exceed 30% of the net median income for the specific group;
 - **Low cost home ownership:** including shared ownership, equity share, and discounted market housing. Costs (mortgage and any rent) are not to exceed 30% of gross median household incomes in South Cambridgeshire except where provided for specific groups of workers, where they should not exceed 30% of the gross median household income for that specific group.
- **Supported housing:** is a generic term used to include supported housing for all client groups covered by the Supporting People Strategy (including people with physical or other disabilities) who cannot afford to buy or rent on the open market. Provision will be considered in the light of identified needs in the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategies and the Supporting People Strategy.

5.9 Affordable housing includes housing for key workers which is allocated on the basis of need for those who currently live in or are employed in the locality of the site in the public sector and / or who are involved in the care and comfort of the community or as may otherwise be defined by the District Council in the future. Such housing to be available to initial and successive occupiers who qualify as Key Workers unless there are no eligible nominees in which case units will be offered to others in housing need from the District Council's Housing Register. The relevant proportion of any Key Worker housing will be determined by the District Council based on evidence of need e.g. Sub-Regional Key Worker Housing Study 2003. Housing for specific groups of workers other than included in the above definition will be included as affordable housing provided that it is supported by evidence that their employers are facing recruitment and retention difficulties related to housing costs, and that the workers cannot afford to rent or buy suitable housing locally to meet their housing needs.

- 5.10 The availability of housing that is affordable and accessible to those in need in South Cambridgeshire is a major and growing issue. Policy P9/2 of the new Structure Plan states that 40% or more of the new housing in the Sub Region will be affordable which will include key worker housing.
- 5.11 The Housing Needs Survey 2002 identified that there was a backlog of housing need of 800 households. In addition, a further 1,047 households per annum are falling into housing need. It is also estimated that there will be a supply of affordable housing through re-lets of existing properties of 323 units per annum. Advice in the government's best practice guide for assessing net annual need for affordable housing is to spread the backlog over 5 years. The annual net affordable housing requirement for the period 2002-2007 is estimated at 884 units per annum. The Survey advises that the best practice guide methodology suggests a target for affordable housing of 66% of all new dwellings (assuming no minimum site size threshold). However, it recommends that taking account of custom and practice a target of 50% would be justifiable in South Cambridgeshire.
- 5.12 The policy applies to all qualifying developments, whether allocations or windfall development. The mix in the types of affordable housing appropriate for an individual site, will be considered having regard to the nature of identified need at the time of the development (district-wide for the major developments, Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres, or in the individual village or the area it serves), the location and scale of the development, and the development economics of the site having regard to the overall infrastructure calls on the development. Affordable housing should be of a high quality and integrated with market housing.
- 5.13 It is envisaged that the indicative mix of affordable housing is likely to be:
1. Approximately 30% social rented; and
 2. Approximately 20% intermediate housing, including for Key Workers;
- giving a total of 50% affordable housing, unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the District Council that the local circumstances suggest a different mix would better meet local needs.
- 5.14 In order to ensure sustainable communities, affordable housing will be distributed through the development in small groups or clusters, typically of 6 to 8 units. The appropriate size of affordable housing groups or clusters will vary depending on the scale of development.
- 5.15 New employment development increases pressure on the housing market, and a lack of suitable affordable housing can lead to recruitment difficulties, unsustainable travel patterns and hinder development and expansion of

clusters. Developments will therefore be expected to mitigate these impacts, in accordance with Policy EM/2.

- 5.16 Guidance on the application of this policy will be provided in a Supplementary Planning Document on affordable housing.

POLICY HG/4 Affordable Housing Subsidy

In exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that there are insurmountable subsidy issues, the Council may negotiate a lower proportion of built affordable housing units to be provided on site.

In exceptional circumstances, on smaller sites, the Council may accept financial contributions towards an element of off-site provision.

- 5.17 Given the uncertainties over the future funding of affordable housing, there is a need for an element of flexibility in order to realise the affordable housing target set out in accordance with the assessed housing need. In exceptional circumstances where there are insurmountable subsidy issues a lower proportion of built units on site could be appropriate. However, in order to ensure that this approach does not prejudice securing significant affordable housing provision in the light of high levels of need, a minimum level of provision of 40% will be required even in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.18 Where the Council has identified additional sites for the provision of affordable housing that could contribute towards the overall affordable housing target for the district e.g. rural exception sites, redevelopment of existing stock to provide higher numbers and better quality housing for those in housing need, financial contributions towards off-site provision will be secured through Section 46 agreements. This approach will only be applicable to small sites where there may be difficulties over delivery and management of small numbers of affordable houses. Financial contributions will be secured towards the provision of affordable housing on other sites. It will not be appropriate for major developments to provide financial contributions in lieu of built provision, as on-site provision is a key part of creating a sustainable community.
- 5.19 Where possible, the financial contributions secured through Section 46 agreements will be used to provide affordable housing in locations as close to the site as possible, either elsewhere within the same village or in nearby villages. However, as monies will be time limited, they may need to be spent elsewhere in the South Cambridgeshire District Council area if no local scheme is sufficiently advanced.

POLICY HG/5 Exceptions Sites for Affordable Housing

As an exception to the normal operation of the policies of this plan, planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on small sites within or adjoining villages. The following criteria will all have to be met:

- 1. The development proposal includes secure arrangements for ensuring that all the dwellings within the scheme provide affordable housing in the long term for those in housing need;**
- 2. The number, size, design, mix and tenure of the dwellings are all confined to, and appropriate to, the strict extent of the identified local need;**
- 3. The site of the proposal is well related to the built-up area of the settlement and the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size and character of the village;**
- 4. The site is well related to facilities and services within the village;**
- 5. The development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscape.**

In the case of sites within the Cambridge Green Belt, before planning permission is granted for such development, the District Council will have to be assured that no alternative appropriate sites can be found for the scale and type of development proposed and that the scheme fulfils all the criteria set out in the Council's policies, including those relating to the impact of new development on local surroundings.

- 5.20 National policy allows for the exceptional release of small sites for affordable housing within or adjoining villages in circumstances where planning permission would not normally be given and where there is a demonstrable local need for affordable housing that cannot be met in any other way. These 'rural exceptions' sites provide a small but important source of affordable housing in rural areas and are regarded as additional to the provision of housing to meet the general needs identified by the Structure Plan.
- 5.21 In every case the needs of the particular village are carefully surveyed and assessed by the Council before a scheme is progressed. Occupancy controls are imposed to ensure that the benefits of affordability (usually gained by the low land value derived from the exceptional basis of the scheme) are preserved in perpetuity for subsequent occupiers.
- 5.22 PPG2: Green Belts states that limited affordable housing may be appropriate within the Green Belt. However, given the nature of the Cambridge Green Belt, which is relatively small in extent, and the need to avoid prejudicing

other strategic and local policies, the District Council will implement this policy with caution.

SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

- 5.23 In addition to the affordable and key worker housing requirements identified above, the following special housing needs should be considered:
- “Lifetime homes” – i.e. housing suitable for the elderly and those with mobility problems.
 - Gypsies and travelling showpeople.
- 5.24 Although not specifically set out in policy, the District Council will expect a proportion of new homes to be provided to meet the needs of the above, in accordance with PPG3: Housing.
- 5.25 For new homes to meet the needs of current and future residents, it is important that they are designed to a high quality and create an attractive environment that functions well, where people want to live, which meets their needs, and which creates a sense of place where community identity can develop. A key element in ensuring that new homes meet local needs is providing homes which are adaptable to the changing needs of most households.
- 5.26 Lifetime homes are those designed to meet the needs of most households, focussing on accessibility and design features that make the home flexible enough to meet whatever comes along in life: a family member with a broken leg, a family member with serious illness, or parents carrying in heavy shopping and dealing with a pushchair. Part M of the Building Regulations cover accessibility and Lifetime Homes features to build-in flexibility to make new homes easy to adapt as peoples’ lives change. Lifetime Homes will be suitable for older people (whose numbers are increasing rapidly) and for the vast majority of disabled people, as well as the non-disabled person. Housing for the elderly and those with mobility problems should be located close to facilities and services and designed with the needs of occupants in mind.
- 5.27 Any proposals for residential care homes within village frameworks will be judged against the policies in the Development Principles chapter.
- 5.28 The needs of Gypsies and travelling showpeople are addressed in a separate Development Plan Document.

HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

POLICY HG/6 Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

Extensions to dwellings in the countryside (i.e. outside village frameworks defined in this plan) will only be permitted where:

- 1. The proposed development would not create a separate dwelling or be capable of separation from the existing dwelling;**
- 2. The extension does not exceed the height of the original dwelling;**
- 3. The extension does not lead to a 50% increase or more in volume or gross internal floor area of the original dwelling;**
- 4. The proposed extension is in scale and character with the existing dwelling and would not materially change the impact of the dwelling on its surroundings;**
- 5. It can be shown that the use of the dwellings has not been abandoned.**

In exceptional circumstances, where it can be shown that the use of the dwelling has not been abandoned, material considerations may justify an exception to criteria (2) and (3), for example, dwellings with a very small original footprint which do not meet modern living standards.

Large extensions to dwellings which are the subject of an agricultural condition are not likely to be acceptable unless it can be demonstrated that the resultant accommodation can be supported by the viability of the holding and that its value would not be such as to be out of reach of workers employed in agriculture.

Limited extension or alteration of existing buildings in the Green Belt is regarded as appropriate development provided the development does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building. Policy GB/2 enforces this matter.

- 5.29 Extensions to dwellings outside frameworks need particularly careful consideration in terms of their impact on the landscape in the generally open countryside of South Cambridgeshire. In addition, housing needs in the District make it important to impose some limitation on the proportionate increase in dwelling sizes as a result of any extension, with the aim of preventing a gradual reduction in the stock of smaller and medium sized dwellings in countryside areas.

- 5.30 Policy HG/6 provides guidelines to assist the achievement of the above two aims. However, it is recognised that there may be some instances in which other material considerations justify a departure from Criteria 2 and 3. This could include dwellings with a very small original footprint that do not meet modern living standards. Criterion 3 considers extensions in the context of the original dwelling in order to avoid incremental increases which when combined have a greater impact on the countryside.

POLICY HG/7 Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

The District Council will permit the one-for-one replacement of dwellings in the countryside subject to the requirements of the General Permitted Development Order (i.e. a maximum enlargement of 15% of volume) and the need to provide satisfactory internal layout and amenities, where:

- 1. It can be shown that the use of a dwelling has not been abandoned;**
- 2. The proposed replacement dwelling is in scale with the dwelling it is intended to replace and is in character with its surroundings;**
- 3. The proposed replacement dwelling would not materially increase the impact of the site on the surrounding countryside.**

This will apply to dwellings both inside and outside the Green Belt.

Caravans and mobile homes are distinct from permanent dwellings since they can be removed. Given the restrictions on development in the countryside the replacement of caravans and mobile homes with permanent dwellings will be resisted outside village frameworks.

- 5.31 Where it can be shown that the use of a dwelling has not been abandoned, replacement on a one-for-one basis may be permitted. As a new dwelling, it is likely to have a greater impact on the countryside than the dwelling it replaces and will benefit from permitted development rights when completed and occupied. Thus replacements ought to be similar in size and height to the original structure. The District Council will permit one-for-one replacements subject to the requirements of the General Permitted Development Order (i.e. a maximum enlargement of 15% of volume) and the need to provide satisfactory internal layout and amenities. This will apply to dwellings both inside and outside the Green Belt. (See also the Green Belt Chapter.)

POLICY HG/10 Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use

Planning permission for conversion of rural buildings for residential use will not generally be permitted. Planning permission will only exceptionally be granted where it can be demonstrated, having regard to market demand or planning considerations;

- 1. Firstly it is inappropriate for any suitable employment use; and**
- 2. Secondly it is inappropriate for employment with residential conversion as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use.**

Any conversion must meet the following criteria:

- a. The buildings are structurally sound;**
- b. The buildings are not of a makeshift nature and have not been allowed to fall into such a state of dereliction and disrepair that any reconstruction would require planning permission as a new building;**
- c. The buildings are capable of re-use without materially changing their existing character or impact upon the surrounding countryside;**
- d. The form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.**
- e. Perform well against sustainability issues highlighted by policy DP/2.**

Any increase in floor area will not be permitted except where it is necessary for the benefit of the design, or in order to better integrate the development with its surroundings. Future extensions of such buildings will not be permitted. Incidental uses such as car parking and storage should be accommodated within any group of buildings, or on well related land where landscaping can reduce the visual impact of the new site.

Development must be in scale with the rural location. Developments resulting of significant scale (based on number of bedrooms) must only be located near to larger settlements or accessible by public transport, cycling, or walking. The cumulative impact of the conversion of a number of buildings on adjoining sites or the local area will also be considered.

Residential conversion permitted as a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use, will be secured by planning condition or agreement to ensure the occupation of the dwelling remains directly related to the operation of the enterprise. The dwelling part of the unit must be interdependently linked with the commercial part. A live-work unit should have a minimum of 40m² of definable functional workspace in addition to the residential element. Internal uses may be horizontally or vertically split. The workspace must be flexible, and capable of accommodating a range of employment uses.

- 5.32 PPS7 requires authorities to include policies setting out criteria for permitting conversion of rural buildings for residential uses. There has been considerable pressure to convert barns and vacant rural buildings into residential units, but this is clearly contrary to the general policy of restricting housing proposals outside established village limits. Policy EM/8 supports conversion of appropriate buildings for employment uses, and this remains the preferred use for such buildings. If this cannot be achieved the second preference is for a residential unit directly tied to operation of a rural enterprise, often referred to as a live work unit. This would be more sustainable, than a conversion for a purely residential use, due to the reduced implications for commuting. Conversion purely for residential use will only be permitted as a last resort, particularly to secure the future of buildings of particular architectural quality or character.

POLICY HG/8 Dwelling to Support a Rural-based Enterprise

Development of a new permanent dwelling for agricultural or forestry purposes, or exceptionally for a rural-based enterprise, will only be permitted if it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the District Council that:

- 1. There is a clear, existing functional need relating to a full-time worker or one who is primarily employed in agriculture;**
- 2. It relates to a well established agricultural unit (which has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so);**
- 3. There are no suitable existing buildings available in the area;**
- 4. The conversion of appropriate nearby buildings would not provide suitable accommodation;**
- 5. No existing dwelling serving the unit or closely connected with it has either recently been sold off or in some way separated from it.**

Where criterion (2) cannot, for the time being, be met, or it relates to a new farming activity on a well established unit, development of a temporary dwelling may be permitted for up to three years where all the other criteria above are met, and there is clear evidence demonstrating:

- a. a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned;**
- b. that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis;**
- c. that the functional need cannot be fulfilled by another existing building on the unit or any existing accommodation.**

The District Council will require “Functional” and “Financial” tests to be undertaken in accordance with PPS7 to demonstrate the above criteria have been met.

Where a new dwelling is permitted, this will be subject to a condition ensuring the occupation will be limited to a person solely or mainly working, or last working, in the locality in agriculture or forestry or a surviving partner of such a person, and to any resident dependants.

The relaxation of an agricultural occupancy condition will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the dwelling is no longer required by the unit or those working, or last working, in the locality in agriculture or forestry or a surviving partner of such a person, and to any resident dependants. When considering applications to relax such condition, the District Council will require evidence of the steps taken to market the dwelling with the occupancy condition.

- 5.33 Although Structure and Local Development Framework policies resist new dwellings in the countryside, the District Council acknowledges that many agricultural workers require accommodation close to their enterprises for husbandry and security and other reasons. Where applicants are able to demonstrate genuine need for new dwellings associated with their enterprise, the District Council may grant planning permission. Since such an approach is a departure from restrictive countryside policy, the planning permission will be subject to a condition restricting occupation. Such a condition will only be discharged in exceptional cases.
- 5.34 In general, preference will be given to the re-use or replacement of existing buildings over those which propose the erection of a new dwelling in order to avoid further development in the countryside. Where new buildings are proposed to be erected they should be sited and designed to minimise impact on the countryside, and where possible be grouped around existing development.

- 5.35 The erection of a further dwelling would not be justified where an existing dwelling serving the unit or closely connected with it has either recently been sold off or in some way separated from it.
- 5.36 When considering planning applications for new enterprises in the countryside and the need for any associated accommodation, the District Council seeks advice concerning the commercial viability of the proposed enterprise. Where such advice indicates that the viability of the enterprise is uncertain, the District Council will firmly resist a permanent dwelling in the countryside. In such circumstances, temporary planning permission may be granted for a caravan associated with the enterprise to enable the applicant to prove that it can provide his / her main livelihood.
- 5.37 A Supplementary Planning Document will be prepared for agricultural dwellings and for dwellings associated with horsiculture.

POLICY HG/9 Dwellings Associated With Horsiculture

Planning permission will not be granted for dwellings in the countryside for the on-site security of horses, stabling and ancillary uses unless the site lies outside the Green Belt and the District Council is satisfied that the applicant has met all the tests set out in Policy HG/8.

- 5.38 With increasing leisure time and the changes in agriculture bringing forward pressures for farmers to diversify, the District Council has experienced increasing demand for horse-riding and the setting up of equestrian activities (often referred to as "horsiculture"). In this context, planning permission is usually required for the construction of new buildings or the conversion of existing buildings for stabling horses and for the change of use of land for exercise, training or jumping horses.
- 5.39 With these approvals, on occasion, there may be pressure to develop a dwelling on site for security purposes - this will be invariably outside village frameworks. The District Council will resist such proposals since they introduce new residential development in the countryside which can often be conspicuous in the generally flat landscape of South Cambridgeshire.
- 5.40 However, given the similarity in the issues which apply to both agricultural use and the keeping of horses, where an application for a dwelling related to the keeping of horses is submitted, the District Council will apply the same considerations as those for agricultural dwellings, as set out in Policy HG/9. However, this will not apply within the Green Belt where horsiculture is not identified as an appropriate use.
- 5.41 Policy HG/9 will also apply to development proposals associated with studs in the District.