

C3 Rural workers' housing

Outside the housing development boundaries of Local Service Centres and Service Villages in Table 1, new residential accommodation for rural workers will only be permitted where all the following are met:

- a) it can be demonstrated that the functional needs of agriculture, or some other essential rural-based enterprise, requires that a full time worker must live at the location proposed;
- b) it can be demonstrated that there are no opportunities for providing the accommodation by using other dwellings within the control of the applicants, or by the conversion of an existing suitable building, or by the acceptable sub-division or extension of an existing dwelling;
- c) the enterprise that the dwelling will serve must not have been instrumental in disposing of any residential property in the preceding three years that would have satisfied the need now identified,
- d) the dwelling will be located within or adjoining an existing group of buildings; and,
- e) in the case of a new permanent dwelling, its size should be commensurate to the needs of the new rural enterprise or associated agricultural unit. This should be justified by evidence supporting the planning application.

If the proposal is for a new rural enterprise or if the long term financial viability of the enterprise cannot be demonstrated, the need to be met by a temporary solution, such as the siting of a residential caravan in a suitable location, for a three year period.

If a dwelling permitted under this policy becomes unoccupied and no suitable occupant is forthcoming after the property has been advertised in accordance with the Authority's advertising procedure (paragraph 3.53), the Authority will consider varying the restriction to that of local occupancy as described in Appendix 5.

Aim

4.18 To safeguard the character of open countryside by preventing avoidable house building outside of towns and villages, while permitting an exception to be made where it is essential for workers in agriculture, forestry or other rural-based enterprises.

Justification

4.19 National planning policy strictly controls house building outside towns and villages for reasons of sustainability and to protect the character of the countryside. The Special Qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park make it a particularly desirable place to live, but its rural character and openness also make it vulnerable to new residential development. Preventing sporadic, isolated new house building in open countryside is a counterpoint to the Authority's strategy of allocating sites and widening the range of housing inside or on the edge of Local Service Centres and Service Villages.

4.20 Where it is demonstrated that it is essential for someone to live at their place of work an exception to the spatial strategy for housing may be permissible. The Authority has acknowledged that gamekeepers and managers of larger established visitor accommodation may fall within the definition of essential rural-based enterprises, although dwellings for additional farm workers usually make up the majority of applications.

4.21 National policy requires that the need for new housing in isolated locations should be based on the nature and demands of the enterprise. A functional and financial test will therefore be applied by the Authority as follows:

- the enterprise to which the dwelling relates has to be located in the countryside outside a settlement. The Authority will not consider favourably proposals for new housing arising from

security concerns, food processing or retirement homes, that do not need to be located in open countryside;

- the dwelling is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise by one or more workers at most times and could not otherwise be managed from another location;
- the need relates to full time work;
- the enterprise has been established for at least 3 years, is financially sound and likely to remain so, having regard to its context; and,
- the existing accommodation at the enterprise is inadequate for the need identified and a rearrangement of existing accommodation has been rejected for good reason.

4.22 An applicant will be required to submit a statement to support their case. This will usually benefit from specialist consultancy.

4.23 It will usually be preferable to consider alternatives to new building, such as reuse of an existing dwelling, sub division or residential conversion. Where no suitable alternative is available, the Authority will consider permitting a new dwelling. The impact on the surrounding countryside of its siting and design will be key considerations. Essential need will not override considerations of environmental impact. If a proposed dwelling in a particular location would be seriously detrimental to landscape character or some other special quality of the National Park, it will not be permitted.

4.24 New houses for rural based enterprises should normally be located within or adjacent to the farmstead or other existing group of buildings, and should not be located in isolated positions.

4.25 Approval of new agricultural dwellings can lead to the sale of existing farm houses and create further pressure for additional housing. Conditions will, therefore, be attached that restrict the occupancy of existing houses on the same agricultural unit, unless there are material mitigating circumstances that can be demonstrated. Such conditions will not be permitted to be relaxed in response to subsequent changes in the circumstances of the occupier of the farm, unless it can be demonstrated that the current and anticipated future need for agricultural workers' dwellings in the locality are otherwise adequately met. Other types of rural enterprise dwellings permitted under this Policy will also be subject to precise occupancy restrictions through planning conditions or legal agreement.

4.26 The size of the new dwelling should be justified in relation to the reasonable operational needs of the enterprise. The objective is to provide for the needs of rural enterprises including future as well as initial occupiers.

4.27 Occasionally the opportunity might arise to set up a new rural based enterprise, such as a new farm unit. Since the success of the new venture is not guaranteed the Authority would require that a temporary dwelling, such as a residential caravan or chalet, is provided for the first three years. An application for a subsequent permanent dwelling would then be considered against the evidence of economic viability in the intervening three years. Temporary dwellings will not be permitted in locations that do not have capacity to accommodate a permanent dwelling.

4.28 An essential need must be a need in the immediate future. Consent will, therefore, be granted subject to a condition requiring construction to commence within two years.

4.29 In the event of a rural worker dwelling becoming unoccupied the Authority would require the property to be advertised at a price that reflected its restriction. If after a period of six months an occupant is not forthcoming then the restriction would default to the local occupancy restriction as set out in Appendix 5. This would accord with the Authority's strategy to direct the release of housing land at local needs.