



# **Housing in the Countryside Guide**

**Perth & Kinross Council**

**November 2012**

## **Housing in the Countryside**

In accordance with SPP, PAN 72 and PAN 68 the Council's objective is to strike a balance between the need to protect the outstanding landscapes of Perth and Kinross and to encourage appropriate housing development in rural areas including the open countryside. The Council seeks to encourage sustainable development in rural areas which means guiding development to places where existing communities and services can be supported, and the need to travel minimised. It also means encouraging the sympathetic reuse of existing traditional buildings of character and beauty and to ensure that new buildings are located correctly and constructed to the highest standards of design and finish.

The policy aims to: safeguard the character of the countryside; support the viability of communities; meet development needs in appropriate locations; and ensure that high standards of siting and design are achieved. Central to achieving this is harnessing the potential of the numerous redundant traditional rural buildings which contribute to the character and quality of the countryside. These buildings represent a significant resource both architecturally and from a sustainability point of view and have the potential to be reused and adapted to help meet present and future rural development needs.

The Council will support proposals for the erection, or creation through conversion, of single houses and groups of houses in the countryside which fall into at least one of the following categories:

- (a) Building Groups.
- (b) Infill sites.
- (c) New houses in the open countryside on defined categories of sites as set out in section 3 of the Supplementary Guidance.
- (d) Renovation or replacement of houses.
- (e) Conversion or replacement of redundant non-domestic buildings.
- (f) Development on rural brownfield land.

This policy does not apply in the Green Belt and its application is limited within the Lunan Valley Catchment Area to economic need, conversions or replacement buildings.

In addition they must also meet all the following criteria:

### **For All Proposals**

- a) Proposals should comply with the guiding principles contained in the Council's current Guidance on the Siting and Design of Houses in Rural Areas and subsequent detailed design guidance.
- b) Pre-application discussion is recommended.
- c) Satisfactory access and services should be available or capable of being provided by the developer.

- d) There will be a strong presumption against the replacement of Listed Buildings, or their restoration in a way which is detrimental to the essential character of the original building.
- e) All proposals for 5 units or more will either: require 25% of the proposed development to be for affordable housing; or require a developer contribution towards the provision of affordable housing, either on or off site. The council's housing needs assessment and the Affordable Housing Policy will be used to determine whether provision is to be on or off site or by way of a financial contribution.

Note: For the purposes of this policy the restoration or replacement of an existing occupied or vacant house (as opposed to a ruin) will not constitute the creation of a new unit.

- f) The quality of the design and materials of the house(s) should be reflected in the design and finish of outbuildings, means of enclosure, access etc. The Planning Authority will consider whether permitted development rights in respect of extensions, outbuildings and means of enclosure etc should be removed to protect the rural character of both the building and the curtilage of a new house(s).
- g) Existing on site materials, particularly stone and slate, should be re-used in the construction of the dwelling house and/or the boundary enclosure, in order to help reflect local character and contribute to sustainability.
- h) Applications for dwellings on locations adjacent to a working farm will only be approved where a satisfactory residential environment can be created, and where the introduction of a dwelling will not compromise the continuation of legitimate agricultural and related activities or the amenity of the residents.
- i) Encouragement will be given to the incorporation of measures to facilitate home working within new development
- j) The proposed development should not conflict with any other policy or proposal in the Local Plan.
- k) It is the Council's policy to halt the loss of biodiversity. Proposals must demonstrate how they will make a positive contribution to the biodiversity of the site. Proposals which might impact on protected sites, or where protected habitats or species (eg bats, barn owls, house martins, swallows, swifts) might be present, will require submission of a survey as part of the planning application to show their location. Proposals should include appropriate measures to avoid loss or disturbance to species. Failure to undertake a survey may mean the proposal contravenes the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and European Directives.

- l) Development proposals should not result in adverse effects, either individually or in combination, on the integrity of the Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary, Loch Leven, South Tayside Goose Roosts and Forest of Clunie SPAs and Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs and the River Tay SACs.
- m) The proposal, in terms of scale, layout and design is appropriate to, and has a good fit with, the landscape character of the area in which it is located, and demonstrates a specific design approach to achieve integration with its setting. Buildings should be sympathetic in terms of scale and proportion to other buildings in the locality. Open space associated with the proposal should be considered as an integral part of the development. Suburban ranch-type fences and non-native fast growing conifers should be avoided. Where new planting is considered to be in keeping with local landscape character, locally native trees and shrubs should be used to integrate buildings with the surrounding landscape and to provide additional biodiversity benefits.

### **1. Building Groups**

Consent will be granted for houses within building groups provided they do not detract from both the residential and visual amenity of the group. Consent will also be granted for houses which extend the group into definable sites formed by existing topography and or well established landscape features which will provide a suitable setting. All proposals must respect the character, layout and building pattern of the group and demonstrate that a high standard of residential amenity can be achieved for the existing and proposed house(s).

Note: An existing building group is defined as 3 or more buildings of a size at least equivalent to a traditional cottage, whether they are of a residential and/or business/agricultural nature. Small ancillary premises such as domestic garages and outbuildings will not be classed as buildings for the purposes of this policy.

Proposals which contribute towards ribbon development will not be supported.

### **2. Infill Sites**

The development of up to 2 new houses in gaps between established houses or a house and another substantial building at least equivalent in size to a traditional cottage may be acceptable where:

- The plot(s) created are comparable in size to the neighbouring residential property(s) and have a similar size of road frontage
- The proportion of each plot occupied by new building should be no greater than that exhibited by the existing house(s)
- There are no uses in the vicinity which would prevent the achievement of an adequate standard of amenity for the proposed house(s), and the amenity of the existing house(s) is maintained
- The size and design of the infill houses should be in sympathy with the existing house(s)
- The full extent of the gap must be included within the new plot(s)

- It complies with the siting criteria set out under category 3.

Proposals in any location, which contribute towards ribbon development will not be supported, nor will proposals which would result in the extension of a settlement boundary.

### **3. New Houses in the Open Countryside**

Favourable consideration will be given to proposals for the construction of new houses in the open countryside where they fall into at least one of the following categories:

#### **3.1 Existing Gardens:**

- Established gardens once associated with a country/estate house, which provide an appropriate landscape setting, but where development would not fundamentally affect the qualities and integrity of the site.
- Walled gardens where development would not affect the integrity of the structure or the garden, and may assist in the preservation of the wall.

#### **3.2 Flood Risk:**

- Relocation of an existing house from within a flood risk area to the best and nearest alternative site, provided the flood risk house is demolished, the site made good, and any ad-hoc protection measures associated with the at-risk property removed, following the occupation of the replacement house.

#### **3.3 Economic Activity**

- A house or group of houses is required either on site or in the locality for a local or key worker associated with either a consented or an established economic activity. The applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that there is a need for the house(s). Where the house is to be associated with a proposed economic activity, construction of the house will not be permitted in advance of the development of the business. Permission may be restricted by an occupancy condition to remain as essential worker housing in perpetuity, or convert to an agreed tenure of affordable housing when the employment use is no longer required.
- Proposals for new country estates with ancillary accommodation may be permitted where they are of outstanding architectural quality and create a new designed landscape. In addition they must demonstrate that they will bring associated employment and long term economic benefits to communities in the surrounding area.

#### **3.4 Houses for Local People:**

A house is required for a local applicant who has lived and/or worked in the area for at least 3 years, and is currently inadequately housed. Proof of residency and/or work status may be required.

Note: The offer of a Rural Home Ownership Grant (or similar) by the Housing Investment Division of the Scottish Government will also be accepted as proof of need.

### 3.5 Pilot projects creating eco-friendly houses:

Such proposals may be supported where a rural setting is required and the project is linked to the management of land or use of land for sustainable living.

#### Siting Criteria

Proposals for a new house falling within category 3 above will require to demonstrate that if when viewed from surrounding vantage points, it meets all of the following criteria:

- a) it blends sympathetically with land form;
- b) it uses existing trees, buildings, slopes or other natural features to provide a backdrop;
- c) it uses an identifiable site, (except in the case of proposals for new country estates) with long established boundaries which must separate the site naturally from the surrounding ground (eg a dry stone dyke, a hedge at minimum height of one metre, a woodland or group of mature trees, or a slope forming an immediate backdrop to the site). The sub-division of a field or other land artificially, for example by post and wire fence or newly planted hedge or tree belt in order to create the site, will not be acceptable;
- d) it does not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding landscape.

Alternatively a new house site will not be acceptable if when viewed from surrounding vantage points;

- a) it occupies a prominent, skyline, top of slope/ridge location;
- b) the site lacks existing mature boundaries (for example, dry stone dyke, a hedge at minimum height of one metre, woodland or a group of trees or a slope forming an immediate backdrop to the site) and
- c) is unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for a new house in the countryside.

## **4. Renovation or Replacement of Houses**

Consent will be granted for the restoration or replacement of houses, including vacant or abandoned houses, subject to the following criteria:

- a) Restoration rather than replacement will be favoured where the building is of traditional form and construction, is otherwise of architectural merit, makes a positive contribution to the landscape or contributes to local character.
- b) Any alterations and extension to an existing house should be in harmony with the existing building's form and proportion.
- c) Only if it can be demonstrated that the existing house is
  - i) either not worthy of retention,
  - ii) or is not capable of rehabilitation at an economic cost,

will substantial rebuilding or complete replacement be permitted.

*Note: Where it is being claimed that a building of architectural quality needs to be wholly or partly demolished to permit rehabilitation or reconstruction an independent expert opinion will be commissioned by the Council, at the applicant's expense, to evaluate the costs of alternative options. Where a house has been demolished prior to the submission of an application or grant of planning consent, there will be no guarantee that a replacement house will be granted.*

- d) Where rebuilding or demolition is permitted the replacement house shall be of a high quality design appropriate to its setting and surrounding area.
- e) The replacement of an abandoned or ruinous house will be permitted where:
  - i) there is substantial visible evidence of the structure of the original building above ground level to enable its size and form to be identified
  - ii) it is located on an established site with a good landscape setting and a good 'fit' in the landscape and on a site acceptable on planning grounds;
  - iii) the site boundaries are capable of providing a suitable enclosure for the new house.
- f) The siting of the new house should be similar to that of the existing building in terms of orientation and distance from the road, unless individual site conditions suggest that another position would create a better landscape fit.

## **5. Conversion or Replacement of Redundant Non-Domestic buildings**

Consent will be granted for the conversion of redundant non-domestic buildings to form houses and may be granted for the extension or replacement of such buildings, provided the following criteria are met:

- a) The building is of traditional form and construction, is otherwise of architectural merit, makes a positive contribution to the landscape or contributes to local character.

- b) Any alteration and extension should be in harmony with the existing building form and materials
- c) Replacement of such buildings will only be permitted in cases where there is objective evidence that the existing building requires to be reconstructed because of structural deficiencies which cannot be remedied at an economic cost.\* The replacement must be generally faithful to the design form and materials of the existing building but may incorporate non-original features which adapt it to modern space requirements and building standards or reflect a local architectural idiom.

\* Where it is being claimed that a building of architectural quality needs to be wholly or partly demolished to permit rehabilitation or reconstruction, the Council will commission an independent expert opinion, at the applicant's expense, to evaluate the costs of alternative options.

Consent will be granted for the conversion of redundant, traditional building complexes such as farm steadings and, in addition, consent may be granted for the extension or replacement of such buildings and for limited new build accommodation associated with the conversion where the following criteria are met:

- d) The conversion/reconstruction has, as its core, the footprint of the existing traditional steading.
- e) Non-original features may be incorporated to adapt the steading to modern space requirements and building standards or to reflect a local architectural idiom,
- f) Extensions and new-build houses should only be contemplated where they reinforce the architectural integrity and external appearance of the original building and its grounds by, for example, infilling appropriate gaps in a group or rounding off a group. It should not be assumed that the entire 'brownfield' area of a site is suitable for housing.
- g) There is a satisfactory composition of new and existing elements in terms of style, layout and materials.
- h) In general no more than 25% of the total units or floor area should comprise new build or rebuilt development.
- i) The proposal will result in a development of high design quality and of a scale and purpose appropriate to its location.
- j) Those parts of the site not required for buildings or private gardens will require to be landscaped to a high standard. Landscaping plans demonstrating this, and how any other land outwith the application site but within the applicants control will be used to provide landscape screening for the proposal must be submitted and approved as part of the planning application.
- k) The development is in an accessible location ie in close proximity to a settlement or public transport links or in proximity to services e.g. schools, shops.



- l) It can be demonstrated that there are no other pressing requirements for other uses such as business or tourism on the site.

Note: Where farming operations require to be moved details of any replacement building and where this will be located should be submitted along with the application for conversion.

For the purposes of this policy a building will be classed as redundant when it can be demonstrated that it: has not been in use for a considerable number of years; is no longer fit for purpose; or is unsuited to the restructuring needs of the farm necessary to ensure a viable farm business.

## **6. Rural Brownfield Land**

Redevelopment for small scale housing of brownfield land which was formerly occupied by buildings may be acceptable where it would remove dereliction or result in a significant environmental improvement and where it can be demonstrated that there are no other pressing requirements for other uses such as business or tourism on the site. A statement of the planning history of the site, including the previous use and condition, must be provided to the planning authority. Proposals should be small scale, up to maximum of five new houses, and must comply with the criteria set out in the For All Proposals section of this policy. All land within the site, including areas not required for housing or private gardens, must be the subject of landscaping and/or other remediation works.

Proposals for more than five new houses on rural brownfield land will only be permitted exceptionally where the planning authority is satisfied that a marginally larger development can be acceptably accommodated on the site and it can be demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that there are social, economic or environmental reasons of overriding public interest requiring such a scale of development in a countryside location.