

Additional Evidence

Policy DM4 – Habitable Floorspace for New Developments

The Government undertook a consultation on housing standards in August 2013 and, as part of this wider review, the rationale for developing national space standards for dwellings was considered.

Key extracts from this consultation document include:

Paragraph 99 – “One key driver for the increasing adoption of space standards is the National Planning Policy Framework [paragraph 50] which requires that local authorities have due regard to the nature of housing development in relation to current and future demand”.

Paragraph 118 – “Government also recognises that there are circumstances where failures or particular conditions within a local housing market (which may not be addressed through market forces alone) could justify intervention through the use of space standards. Government believes that this should not be imposed from the centre but also thinks that it is right that local communities and neighbourhoods should be able to set out what housing they want, and in doing so, become more supportive of new development in their area.”

Paragraph 125 – “...on the basis that any requirements for space standards in a local plan could, in future, demonstrate that they do not unduly affect viability, and would need to be justified by suitably robust evidence...”

In addition, Salford City Council proposed space standards for dwellings in their Core Strategy and, although this document was withdrawn from examination, this was not due to the space standards. In the Inspector’s letter into the withdrawal of Salford’s Core Strategy, paragraph 7 states:

“I agree that there should be policies concerned with the size of dwellings and the provision of amenity space in residential development (Policies H5 and H6) in that they amplify at the local level the policy in the Framework that good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people.”

Policy DM11 – Existing Businesses in the Green Belt

The Council proposes that lawfully established businesses in the Green Belt should demonstrate that the proposal to extend or replace existing premises, or changes of use to enable diversification is necessary for the functioning of the existing business, and the proposed development would not be better situated in a deliverable and available location elsewhere in the District (criterion v).

The need to support existing businesses in the Green Belt is recognised by the Council and the policy seeks to do this. However, the Council does not wish to encourage businesses to relocate from designated employment land to the Green Belt, or to support existing businesses to remain located in the Green Belt when their business may be more appropriately located on suitable employment land in the District. As such the requirement within the policy for adequate justification for the proposal seeks to balance supporting appropriate existing businesses operating in the Green Belt, whilst discouraging other

businesses from relocating from employment land to potentially less appropriate locations in the Green Belt.

Policy DM13 – Conversion of Existing Agricultural and Rural Buildings in the Green Belt

The requirement for applications for the conversion of agricultural and rural buildings to relate to an existing building with a form, bulk and general design in-keeping with its surroundings (criterion i) is considered to be appropriate to ensure that it would not have an undue impact on the openness of the Green Belt, as well as the wider character of the countryside. The NPPF (paragraph 28, point 3) recognises the importance of character, stating that local and neighbourhood plans should “support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside...”.

Whilst the Council seeks to support the rural economy through permitting the conversion of agricultural and rural buildings, permitting the conversion of buildings which are out of character with their surroundings could have a greater impact on openness of the Green Belt and character of the countryside.

Policy DM14 – Green Tourism

The Development Management Submission Document seeks to support rural diversification and green tourism, including the conversion of existing agricultural and rural buildings to bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets. The proposed modifications to Policy DM14 includes a clause to require applicants to demonstrate that there is clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned; and there is clear evidence that the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis.

Whilst planning permission would be required to convert bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets to a residential dwelling, once a bed and breakfast/small scale hotel/holiday let has received planning permission it would then be very hard to resist proposals for planning permission for the future conversion of such a building to a single or to multiple residential dwellings. It would be difficult for the Council to argue once permission has been granted for bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets that such dwellings would have greater harm on designations such as the Green Belt and Coastal Protection Belt than the approved bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets. So it is paramount that the Council carefully consider proposals for bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets from the outset to anticipate possible future proposals for dwelling conversions.

The benefit of such a clause would be to prevent applications that the Council may receive for bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets which are simply just a pre-cursor to an intended proposal for conversion to a residential dwelling. Such conversion is likely to be unsustainable and have an impact on the openness and character of the Green Belt; it is not supported by Core Strategy Policy GB2, and would not make a contribution to the rural economy and the promotion of tourism as per the intentions of the policy. Nevertheless such residential conversion may prove difficult for the Council to resist once permission has been approved for bed and breakfasts/small scale hotels/holiday lets. The proposed policy requires applicants to demonstrate that a bed and breakfast/small scale hotel/holiday let proposal has been carefully considered and planned on a sound financial basis which would

ensure that those who were seriously intending to implement such a use are those who invest in the necessary reports to demonstrate their case.

Policy DM16 – Playing Pitches and Other Leisure and Recreational Activities

There are a number of cases in the District where the siting of containers and/or portable buildings have been an issue. Examples include:

- Land opposite The Chichester, Old London Road, Rawreth – This was an enforcement matter (08/00192/COND_C) but permission for the portable buildings and containers was applied for retrospectively. There are a number of containers on the site as two different clubs use it. Residents did complain about the appearance and the number of units but it was difficult to resist because they complied with the wording of the policy at the time.
- Land at Pelhams Farm, Cherry Orchard Way, Rochford – There was an enforcement case on this site in 2006 (06/00076/COU_C) for the siting of a number of containers associated with the football pitches which was eventually closed. However, it was noted that this cluster of containers were sighted on open land without any visual presence which attracted graffiti.

It is considered important to include conditions to a grant of permission for playing pitches to ensure the appropriate siting of containers and/or portable buildings and minimise impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Conditions would therefore enable officers to ensure the appropriate siting of the facilities and require suitable planting/screening. Temporary permissions for such facilities are not considered to be workable as applicants tend to submit repeat renewals as proper buildings are often unaffordable.

Policy DM20 – Basements in the Green Belt

This policy proposes to remove permitted development rights for those dwellings in the Green Belt where a basement extension is permitted. Although basements extensions would not have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt as such due to their nature, they could still have an impact due to an increased residential use and associated movements. Permitting additional above ground extensions in line with permitted development rights could potentially lead to a substantial increase in the floor area of existing dwellings which would have a significant visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt in addition to further movements associated with an increase in residential use in the Green Belt.

Policy DM35 – Upper Floor Locations in Town Centres

Whilst the presence of residential uses within town centres is important to contribute to the overall vitality and viability of town centres, it is also important to retain commercial and leisure uses as part of the mix of uses available. Commercial and leisure uses are considered to be “main town centre uses” as defined within the NPPF (page 53). Indeed paragraph 23 recognises the importance of these main town centres uses, and seeks to promote such uses to ensure that adequate suitable sites are available and planned for. As such, whilst Policy DM35 would not prevent the conversion of upper floors in town centres for residential use, it seeks to ensure that there is no net loss of commercial and leisure uses to the detriment of the vitality and viability of town centres.