

New homes in the countryside to meet a locally agreed need

(January 2019)

This is an informal guidance note published by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

The purpose of this note is to provide advice on the interpretation of Policy SS6(e) of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011-2029) which permits new homes in the countryside that meet a locally agreed need.

Guidance on Policy SS6(e) that was previously published in October 2016. A number of appeal decisions have found its advice to provide a reasonable basis to determine local housing need requirements, so its content has remained principally unchanged.

1. Local Plan Policy SS1 (Scale and Distribution of New Housing) sets out a spatial strategy for the Local Authority to meet its full housing need over the Plan period. The strategy is principally based upon the development of allocated greenfield sites and the redevelopment of land in the towns and villages. Development in the countryside is generally restricted.
2. However, Local Plan Policy SS6 recognises that there will be some limited circumstances where it is appropriate to allow new housing development in the countryside (outside the Settlement Policy Boundaries, as defined on the Local Plan Policies Map). The policy therefore allows a limited number of exceptions to be made to the general policy of restraint on housing in the countryside.
3. This note has been produced by officers to provide informal guidance on how the requirements of the policy should be interpreted, and where relevant, what information should be provided to support such planning applications.
4. In accordance with s.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The council will need to consider whether there are material considerations that indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.

Local Plan policy

5. Local Plan Policy SS6(e) states that, 'Development proposals for new housing in the countryside outside of Settlement Policy Boundaries will only be permitted where they are: ...'

- e) Small scale⁸ residential proposals of a scale and type that meet a locally agreed need provided that:
- ix) It is well related to the existing settlement and would not result in an isolated form of development; and
- x) The development will respect the qualities of the local landscape and be sympathetic to its character and visual quality; and
- xi) The development will respect and relate to the character, form and appearance of surrounding development, and respect the amenities of the residents of neighbouring properties; or

⁸ Four dwellings or fewer (net).

6. The tests in criteria SS6e are therefore in two parts. The first part (e) sets out the overall limits of the exception whilst the second part (criteria ix – xi) then sets out detailed criteria for proposals that are within that exception. Therefore, a proposal that can satisfy the first part of criterion e) will fall within the exception as a matter of principle, but the specific details then need to be considered in terms of the criteria of the second part of the policy. A proposal which could not satisfy the exception should not therefore be accepted even if it might otherwise comply with the detailed criteria in the policy. A Planning Statement should be provided with each application to clearly demonstrate how the policy requirement would be met.

Overall limits of the exception

What are small scale residential proposals?

7. The footnote to this policy clarifies that criterion e) only applies to those developments of 'four dwellings or fewer (net)'.

Would the scale and type of development meet a locally agreed need?

8. The applicant should provide evidence to demonstrate that their proposal meets a specific and clearly-identified unmet housing need in the local area in terms of number, size type and tenure.
9. Although it may be helpful to provide contextual information about housing need at a national or borough-wide level (which may be informed by the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015)), a general need for additional housing in the borough would not in itself satisfy the exception of a 'locally agreed need'. Nor would an individual's personal need for housing amount to a 'locally agreed need'.
10. Proposals must objectively demonstrate a need existing at a local level. Therefore proposals should be supported by a comprehensive assessment of requirements in the local area. This should demonstrate a particular local need for the scale, size and type of homes proposed within the Parish or that particular village/settlement. It will usually be appropriate to assess need at Parish level, except where a Parish includes more than one settlement or where the proposal is adjacent to a neighbouring parish. In such cases, it will be necessary to show that the need arises

in the settlement where the new homes are proposed. Any judgement that the borough council makes on this matter would need to have regard to locally expressed views but these views could not be regarded as determinative.

11. As outlined above, applications must objectively demonstrate a need existing at a local level. They should therefore be accompanied by a local Housing Needs Assessment commissioned by the applicant, or up-to-date evidence published by the Borough Council or the Parish Council which is related to the local area (including evidence prepared in support of neighbourhood planning). This evidence would be expected to identify the need for the proposed homes, including details of their type, size and tenure. This should be based upon surveys of local residents, where relevant, and include:

- A review of the existing housing stock in the village or Parish;
- An assessment of housing need. This should identify a local need for housing and an indication of the type of housing that would meet the identified needs. This may be housing that would meet a particular employment or community need, or the changing housing needs of the village; and
- An assessment of whether there have been any permissions granted (but not implemented) in the area which could help to meet the identified local need, and the churn in the local housing stock that could make suitable properties available. This information can be found by searching planning decisions on the Council's website, using the 'advanced search' function.
<https://planning.basingstoke.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=advanced>

12. In order for the need to be 'locally agreed', it must be agreed by the Local Planning Authority, having regard to locally expressed views. In his report on the examination of the now adopted Local Plan, the Planning Inspector noted that a draft criterion relating to a requirement for the support of the local parish council was contrary to national planning policy. This was consequently modified in the now adopted Policy.

13. Paragraph 4.77 of the Local Plan states that local need would be agreed in consultation with the parish/town council and therefore it is suggested that the scope of any survey work is agreed with the Local Planning Authority and the parish/town council at the outset. Although parish/town councils will routinely be consulted on such planning applications, it is recommended that the applicant obtains the views of the parish or town council in writing in relation to the findings of that survey work prior to the submission of the planning application.