

## **Development Management Guidance Note**

### **Replacement dwellings in the countryside in the context of Cornwall Local Plan Policy 7(1)**

#### **Introduction**

This guidance note is concerned solely with development proposals relating to the replacement of dwellings in the countryside in the context of Cornwall Local Plan (CLP) policy 7: Housing in the Countryside.

CLP Policy 7 states that “the development of new homes in the open countryside will only be permitted where there are special circumstances”. The open countryside is defined in the supporting text as “the area outside of the physical boundaries (where they have a clear form and shape)”. The policy sets out different ways (the ‘special circumstances’) for providing dwellings in the countryside and this guidance note concentrates on Policy 7(1):

“Replacement dwellings broadly comparable to the size, scale and bulk of the dwelling being replaced and of an appropriate scale and character to their location.”

The supporting text to CLP Policy 7 explains that while most new housing development will be provided in settlements with facilities, it is recognised that there may be a need for some new housing in the countryside.

The purpose of this guidance note is to assist with the submission and assessment of planning applications for replacement dwellings in the countryside by offering an interpretation of the term ‘broadly comparable’. The aim is to provide greater certainty and ensure more consistent and better quality decision making in the planning process. Current decisions consider whether the proposed replacement dwelling is broadly comparable in size, scale and bulk and, if it is not, whether any significant harm is caused, in effect splitting the two elements of Policy 7(1). It is outside the scope of this guidance note to discuss the meaning of ‘harm’ in the context of size, scale, bulk and character; each case requires individual assessment.

## Considerations and Guidance

- The CLP policies are not designed to be read in isolation and should form part of an overall balance with other relevant policies e.g. design, natural environment and historic environment.
- The aim of the CLP is to provide new and better quality housing, therefore the replacement of poor quality dwellings in the countryside should be encouraged.
- At the outset, there is a need to consider whether the proposal constitutes Policy 3 or Policy 7 development. In other words, a judgement needs to be made on whether the application site is within a settlement or the open countryside to ensure the correct policy is being applied. Open countryside is defined in the supporting text of the CLP, paragraph 2.33.
- Policy 7 (1) does not apply to replacement dwellings in settlements.
- The residential dwelling to be replaced should be lawful and immune from enforcement action. It should be permanent and can include caravans, chalets and park homes.
- If the proposal is Policy 7 (1) development and the existing dwelling is traditionally built and structurally sound, consideration should be given to the retention or incorporation of the building, or part of it, within the scheme.
- The term 'broadly comparable' should not be narrowly interpreted and account should be taken of the size of the site and character of the area; a dogmatic approach should not be adopted. Size is only one part of the consideration. A dwelling that is well designed and appropriate to the scale and character of its location is likely to be considered 'broadly comparable'.

- An alternative siting for a replacement dwelling may be acceptable, for example where it is appropriate to the scale and character of the location or where there are other material planning considerations.
- Decision making should take a broader view in terms of possible fall-back positions e.g. caravans can be replaced with twin units (subject to size limitations) and extensions may be permitted to existing dwellings under permitted development rights.
- More scrutiny will be required where the application site lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of Great Landscape Value, Heritage Coast, World Heritage Site or Listed Building or the setting of these designations. In some cases, an appropriate impact assessment/appraisal may be required.
- If there is a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the area within which the application site lies, the status of the NDP should be established and any relevant policies relating to replacement dwellings in the countryside examined and given appropriate weight. More information can be found here: [NDPs](#)
- While there may be similarities, no two proposals are likely to be the same and it is therefore essential to judge each case on its merits.

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