

Torfaen Local Plan - Supplementary Planning Guidance

Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

December 2004

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Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The popularity of rural areas as places in which to live coupled with the limited opportunities for rural housing development places considerable pressure on the existing dwelling stock for improvement, enlargement and occasionally, their complete replacement.
- 1.2 The countryside is an important public resource that must be protected for the sake of its ecological, agricultural, landscape, heritage and recreational value. The land uses, landscape and built features that make a positive contribution to the character of the Torfaen landscape must be preserved and, where possible, those that detract from it enhanced.
- 1.3 This guidance identifies the issues surrounding the replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside and has been prepared to supplement the policies of the Gwent Structure Plan and the Torfaen Local Plan.
- 1.4 Public consultation over the guidance was carried out between 12 November 2003 and 24 December 2003 so that the interests of others could be taken into account. The comments received were taken into account and the guidance was adopted as supplementary planning guidance on 21 December 2004. The guidance may be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals received by the Council, the Planning Inspectorate and the Welsh Assembly Government.

2 Replacement Dwellings in Torfaen

- 2.1 The Council seeks to promote sustainable patterns of housing development by directing it to places with good existing services and infrastructure, and where it can help to maintain communities and minimise the need for travel.
- 2.2 The replacement of rural dwellings in a poor state of repair with modern buildings of good design can help to maintain the stock of housing available to rural communities, improve the appearance of the countryside and be more energy efficient. Replacement dwellings in isolated locations however that are much larger than the original dwelling have the potential to generate many more car borne journeys in order to access essential services and employment opportunities, and have a negative impact upon the landscape.

- 2.3 The *Gwent Structure Plan* (1996) and the *Torfaen Local Plan* (2000) provide land use planning policy to 2006. These direct new residential development to urban areas and seek to continue to protect the best of the countryside.
- 2.4 New dwellings in the countryside are strictly controlled in both plans in the interest of protecting the countryside for the benefit of the community as a whole. Much of the Torfaen countryside is identified in the Structure Plan as Special Landscape Area for its scenic qualities or Green Space to preserve its open and undeveloped character. These areas are identified in detail in the Local Plan along with policies that require that the scale, design and character of development is appropriate to the area, minimises visual intrusion and respects its rural setting.
- 2.5 The Welsh Assembly Government sets out its objectives and policies for the planning system in Wales in *Planning Policy Wales 2002* (PPW). The Council must take this guidance into account and, due to its recent publication, afford it significant weight. Key policy objectives include the need to promote resource efficient settlement patterns, to locate development so as to minimise the demand for car travel, the conservation and enhancement of the countryside, and to reduce waste. PPW requires that the countryside be conserved and enhanced for the sake of its ecological, geological, physiographic, historical, archaeological and agricultural value and for its landscape and natural resources. The planning system also has a strong commitment to reduce the volume of waste going to landfill to help achieve targets laid down by the European Commission (EC directive 1999/31/EC).

3 Design in the Torfaen Countryside

- 3.1 Before new buildings are designed for the Torfaen countryside consideration must be given to the landscape character of the site and its surroundings and any design priorities for the locality. These are the first stages of the design process to ensure that new buildings are responsive to their setting and applicants for planning permission should be able to demonstrate that they have taken these matters into account (see Policy 2 at section 5).
- 3.2 The design objectives for development in the Torfaen countryside are contained within the Local Plan designations of particular areas:
- In the Green Space (**policy E1**) the primary aim is to retain the *open character and unbuilt form* of this strategically important countryside located between Cwmbran and Newport. No substantial new buildings will be permitted and any development

must be of a high quality due to the proximity of urban areas and major routes.

- Within Special Landscape Areas (**policy E2**) the primary consideration will be the *conservation and enhancement* of the environment and landscape. It is not intended to preclude rural development provided that it is sited and designed to harmonise with its landscape setting.
- In Landscape Improvement Areas (**policy E4**) the priority of the Council will be to *promote land reclamation projects and remove derelict features*. New development must improve and enhance the quality, character, and visual amenities of the area.

3.3 A character appraisal of the site and its surroundings should take into account those landscape features that make up its character including:

- topography;
- land uses;
- settlement pattern and arrangement of buildings;
- vegetation and planting;
- highway network including footpaths and bridleways;
- architectural and cultural traditions ; and,
- the way these features interact with each other and any other aspects that contribute towards local distinctiveness.

4 Policy 1 - Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

Replacement dwellings will be permitted in countryside locations beyond the urban boundaries designated in the Local Plan where all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- The existing building has a lawful use as a dwelling under the Town and Country Planning Acts .**
Applications for replacement dwellings on land where no demonstrable lawful use as a dwelling exists or where the dwelling has been demolished will be considered against the restrictive policies of the development plan for new dwellings in the countryside.
- The existing dwelling is substandard and not capable of economic repair or alteration.**
The replacement of a structurally sound dwelling will be resisted in order to minimise the generation of unnecessary waste building materials and the need to transport this waste to a means of end disposal. Only in cases where there is a significant enhancement of t he

character and appearance of the countryside will the replacement of a structurally sound dwelling be allowed.

- iii. **The replacement dwelling is not materially larger than the existing dwelling.**
This will be assessed in terms of being more visually intrusive or capable of higher levels of occupancy.
- iv. **The development incorporates a satisfactory scheme for the reduction of waste and/or re-use of existing building materials.**
In all cases applicants will be required to submit a scheme setting out the steps taken to minimise waste production, including the reuse of appropriate buildings, structures and materials. Proposals involving the avoidable disposal of existing building materials will not be permitted.
- v. **The replacement dwelling is sited in the same position as the existing dwelling, unless it can be better sited to minimise its visual impact.**
The re-siting of a dwelling should not preclude the opportunity to reuse the existing materials. In cases where existing materials are inappropriate the existing dwelling must be removed prior to the occupation of its replacement to prevent the establishment of an additional dwelling in its own right that would not otherwise be permitted.
- vi. **The replacement dwelling together with its access, boundary treatment, curtilage and associated structures and landscaping is of a high standard of design.**
The size, scale, layout and appearance of the proposal must respect the qualities of its countryside setting, contribute towards sense of place, and be sympathetic to long views towards the site especially from public vantage points. Overly large or conspicuous new gardens, curtilage buildings, fences, walls or other means of enclosure, hard landscaping and planting may not be acceptable.
- vii. **The replacement dwelling utilises good quality building materials, finishes and lighting.**
The external appearance of the building will be required to enhance the landscape setting of the proposal by virtue of the authenticity, colour, texture and reflectiveness of its materials.

5 Policy 2 - Information to Accompany a Planning Application

Planning permission will only be granted where the following information is submitted, at a level of detail commensurate with the scale and sensitivity of the proposal and its surroundings:

- i. **Evidence of the lawfulness of the existing dwelling;**
- ii. **A structural survey and builders quotations for essential repairs or alterations;**
- iii. **A design statement setting out how the proposal would respond to the character of the site and its setting and the policy matters in this guidance;**
- iv. **A scheme for the reduction and/or re -use of existing building materials;**
- v. **Illustrative material of the proposal in context including the surrounding land uses, buildings and highway network and landscape views towards the site;**
- vi. **Detail scale drawings of the existing and proposed site layout and buildings in plan and elevation;**
- vii. **Details of all external materials and finishes including access and boundary treatments, lighting proposals and hard landscaping such as parking or paved areas; and,**
- viii. **A scheme for soft landscaping detailing position, species and planting seasons.**

5.1 Applicants are strongly encouraged to enter into pre -application discussions with the Council to establish what information is required to be submitted in a particular case. They should provide a written statement setting out the design principles they have adopted in relation to the site and its wider context. This requires applicants to think about design in an analytical and positive way and helps decision makers to assess the application against design policies.

5.2 A design statement submitted with a planning application should:

- Explain the design principles and design concept;
- Outline how these are reflected in the development's layout, density, scale, visual appearance and landscape;
- Explain how the design relates to its site and wider area (through a full site and area appraisal where appropriate);
- Explain how the development will meet the Council's design objectives and other planning policies.

5.3 The written design statement should be accompanied by:

- Plans and elevations;
- Photographs of the site and its surroundings;
- Illustrations of the proposal in context such as perspective drawings.

It is important that plans and illustrations submitted with planning applications should be suitable for their purpose. Technical production drawings contain information which is often superfluous to the planning process and unlikely to convey the character of the design in a way that is helpful to the Council and other interested parties. Coloured plans and three-dimensional drawings may be more easily understood. Perspectives must be accurate and drawn from a relevant viewpoint.

5.4 Drawings of elevations should extend beyond buildings to include site boundaries and show the relationship of the proposal to neighbouring land uses and buildings.

6 Further Enquiries

For pre-application discussion or further information on the Council's handling of replacement dwelling proposals please contact:

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NP44 2WN*

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