

# Chapter 10

## HOUSING

The South Somerset Local Plan (SSLP) was adopted on 27 April 2006 and “saved” until 26 April 2009 pending the preparation of replacement Local Development Framework (LDF) documents.

The Government Office for the South West have agreed to extend most Policies and Proposals beyond the 3 year saved period”.

**Policies** that have not been extended are struck through in the text. For ease of reference these are:

Chapter 6: Utilities	Policy EU1	Renewable Energy
	Policy EU2	Wind Turbines
	Policy EU5	Flooding
Chapter 10: Housing	Policy HG5	Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside
	Policy HG13	Sites for Travelling Show People
	Policy HG14	Sites for Travelling Show People

A number of **Proposals** have also not been extended as they have already been implemented or have Planning Permission and are under construction. These are:

Chapter 12: Area East	Proposal ME/CACA/3(ii)	Torbay Road, Castle Cary
Chapter 13: Area North	Proposal HG/SOME/4	The Mill House, Sutton Road, Somerton
	Proposal HG/SOPE/2	Land at Lightgate Lane, South Petherton
	Proposal TP/SOME/5	Widening of Cartway Lane, Somerton
	Proposal TP/SOME/6	Pedestrian Priority in West Street, Somerton
Chapter 14: Area South	Proposal CR/FIVE/1	Land at existing playing field, Fivehead
	Proposal HG/YEOV/2	Former Factory site, west of Larkhill Road, Yeovil
	Proposal HG/YEOV/3	Former Jewsons Yard, Newton Road, Yeovil
	Proposal ME/YEOV/6	Land east of Buckland Road, Pen Mill, Yeovil
Chapter 15: Area West	Proposal CR/BRYM/3	Land at Abbey Farm, Yeovil
	Proposal HG/CHAR/2	Land off Lower Touches, Chard
	Proposal HG/ILMI/1	Land north of Summervale Medical Centre, Wharf Lane, Ilminster
	Proposal MU/ILMI/2	Land off Shudrick Lane, Ilminster



## CHAPTER 10: HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

#### Population Growth and the Existing Housing Pattern

- 10.1 Census 2001 demonstrates that the population of South Somerset between 1991 and 2001 increased by 6.5% from 141,655 to 150,969. The latest population estimate for South Somerset (2004) was 155,100 – an estimated increase of 1.03% since 2001. The population of the Parish of Yeovil has decreased by 0.5% between 1991 and 2001, whereas all market towns (as defined in the 2006 Market Towns Vision) have seen an increase in population during this time period.
- 10.2 The 2001 Census of population recorded a total of 63,769 households in the District, compared to 56,117 in 1991, an increase of 12% in 10 years. This rate of increase is far greater than for the population and reflects the decline in average size of households. This trend is expected to continue, due to factors such as young people leaving home earlier, the increase in life expectancy of older people and also the increasing incidence of marital breakdown. Further information is available in the 2005 'Quality of Life in South Somerset'.

#### The Future Housing Pattern

- 10.3 The housing requirement for the Plan period, 1991 to 2011, was derived initially from the South West Regional Planning Guidance. This provides a figure for the County of Somerset of 50,000 additional dwellings between 1991 and 2011. The adopted Joint Structure Plan requirement was however set at 44,800 dwellings over the same period.
- 10.4 The Joint Structure Plan Review aims to ensure that future development will be more sustainable by minimising its impact on the existing built and natural environment with a strategy of "focused development". This Local Plan develops the policies of the Joint Structure Plan Review, by taking into account local economic conditions and requirements,

allocating sites and providing greater detail in terms of physical development of land.

#### Provision for Housing Development

- 10.5 South Somerset District was apportioned about 31.3% of the County total of new dwellings in the Somerset Structure Plan and Alteration No.1 and about 28.2% in the Structure Plan Alteration No. 2. Despite the environmental constraints to development in South Somerset, the share of the County total in the adopted Joint Structure Plan Review does not reflect the lower level expressed in Alteration No. 2. The adopted figure of 13,700 additional dwellings is about 30.6% of the County total for the period June 1991 to July 2011. This figure has been used as a basis for calculation in this Local Plan.

#### Regular Review of Housing Provision (Plan, Monitor and Manage)

- 10.6 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing introduced the concept of 'Plan, Monitor and Manage' rather than 'predict and provide' for the delivery of housing through the planning system. This new approach means that housing provision requirements identified in Regional, Structure and Local Plans should in future be subject to detailed annual monitoring and regular review.
- 10.7 South Somerset will therefore regularly review its housing land provision, in consultation with the other Somerset authorities. In particular and in line with the Government's Good Practice Guide on monitoring it will monitor the following indicators:
- numbers of dwellings provided in the plan area;
  - proportion of dwellings provided on previously-developed land or re-use of existing buildings;
  - numbers of dwellings provided on windfall sites;
  - numbers of affordable dwellings provided;

- the variety of types and mix of sizes of housing;
- the density of new development; and car parking provision.

### LOCAL PLAN OBJECTIVES

10.8 Before examining the basis for responding to these housing requirements, it is important to establish the objectives which are behind the housing strategy, as an elaboration of the overall objectives of the Local Plan, which are set out in Chapter 2. The objectives, in relation to housing, can be summarised as:-

1. To ensure that adequate housing is provided in conformity with the adopted Joint Structure Plan Review and other Local Plan policies and text, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.
2. To provide for a variety of types and sizes of housing but to locate development so far as possible to minimise the need for the consumption of resources, including the resources of the countryside and of energy expended in transport (by minimising car journeys to work, school and to other local facilities).
3. Priority will be given to the use of recycled land over Greenfield development. In order to promote this objective, an indicative target of at least 45% of the overall housing requirement being built on recycled land has been set. This has been arrived following a review of housing land supply and distribution of development, part of which was an Urban Housing Capacity Assessment which identified opportunities for recycled land development. This target is considered to be a challenging target, given the rural nature of the District, the general small size of the Towns and with few significant areas of dereliction but will be subject of continuous monitoring and review as part of 'Plan, Monitor and Manage'.
4. To locate major development/key sites so as to take maximum advantages of such services, emphasising the role of public transport in relation to new developments.

5. To meet identified local housing need wherever possible, through the provision of affordable housing within a development allocation, the granting of planning permission or provision through "exceptions" policies and through encouraging a range of house types and sizes, the subdivision of larger dwellings and conversion of other buildings.
6. To ensure that new housing developments are designed and landscaped to a high standard, compatible with the character of the local area.
7. To provide for new housing developments to contribute towards environmental improvements including the creation of appropriate areas of open space.
8. Through the concept of 'Plan, Monitor and Manage' South Somerset will regularly review its housing land provision, in consultation with the other Somerset Authorities.
9. Seek to concentrate most additional housing within urban areas.

10.9 Overall, the Local Plan has taken into account demographic and economic development, changing patterns of employment and travel to work and trends in market demand for housing through its regard to the Regional Planning Guidance and the Joint Structure Plan Review. Planning policies have been introduced taking into account those in housing need or those with particular requirements.

### POLICIES

#### Provision for New Housing Development

10.10 In light of these objectives, Policy HG1 provides for about 13,700 dwellings to be built in South Somerset District between July 1991 to June 2011. As at October 1999, 7,710 of these dwellings have already been constructed, are under construction or are committed. Allowing for a projected windfall provision through the development of as yet unidentified sites for 1821 dwellings, this leaves a total of 4,169 dwellings to be provided on sites allocated in this plan.

## Policy HG1

Provision is made for sufficient development to meet the overall requirement of about 13,700 dwellings in the plan area for the period April 1991 to April 2011.

This provision includes infilling and redevelopment within development areas, conversion of existing buildings and residential mobile homes.

**TABLE 10.1: HOUSING LAND REQUIREMENT  
(As at October 1999)**

**STRUCTURE PLAN REQUIREMENTS  
about 13,700**

**Supply at 01/10/99**

Completions	4,858
Under construction	894
With planning permission	1,958
<b>TOTAL COMMITMENTS</b>	<b>7,710</b>

**BALANCE OF HOUSING TO BE PROVIDED**

Post October 1999 5,990

**Windfall allowance**

Small urban sites (less than 0.4 ha)	1,227
Medium urban sites (0.4 to 1 ha)	130
Large urban sites (over 1 ha)	248
Rural sites	216
<b>TOTAL WINDFALLS</b>	<b>1,821</b>

**RESIDUAL REQUIREMENT 4,169**

- 10.11 The provision within Policy HG1 includes sites allocated for about 4,360 dwellings within the District. The provisions relating to those unimplemented allocations carried forward from previous part area Local Plans and identified new allocations in terms of approximate numbers of dwellings, are identified with reference to the appropriate proposal for additional criteria or provisos concerning the sites' release (Policy HG2). It should be noted that the Council has taken on board consultants advice that some sites are not anticipated to be completed within the Plan period.

## Policy HG2

Area East

## Sites within established development areas

Ansford/Castle Cary	HG/ANSF/1	say 18
Ansford/Castle Cary	HG/CACA/1	8
Wincanton	HG/WINC/2	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>

## Greenfield, urban extension sites

Wincanton	KS/WINC/1	250
Ansford/Castle Cary	HG/CACA/2	30
Bruton	HG/BRUT/1	60
Milborne Port	HG/MIPO/1	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>358</b>

Area North

## Sites within established development areas

Martock	HG/MART/1	14
Somerton	HG/SOME/2	19
Somerton	HG/SOME/3	14
Somerton	HG/SOME/4	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

## Greenfield, urban extension sites

Huish Episcopi	HG/HUEP/1	53
Somerton	HG/SOME/1	140
South Petherton	HG/SOPE/1	30
South Petherton	HG/SOPE/2	51
	<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>

Area South

## Sites within established development areas

Yeovil	HG/YEOV/1	15
Yeovil	HG/YEOV/2	56
Yeovil	HG/YEOV/3	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>

## Greenfield, urban extension sites

Yeovil	KS/BRYM/1	616
Yeovil	KS/YEWI/1	717
Yeovil	KS/YEWI/2	580
	<b>(in the plan period)</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1913</b>

Area West

## Sites within established development areas

Chard	HG/CHAR/2	20
Chard	HG/CHAR/3	21
Ilminster	HG/ILMI/1	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>

Greenfield, urban extension sites		
Chard	KS/CHAR/1 (in the plan period)	700
Crewkerne	KS/CREW/1	438
Crewkerne	HG/CREW/2	19
Crewkerne	HG/CREW/3	110
	Total	1267
Total from sites within established development areas		
		243
Total from greenfield, urban extension sites		
		3812
Total of all allocations		
		4055

Mixed use allocations with unspecified housing provision

Chard	MU/CHAR/4
Ilminster	MU/ILMI/2

Phasing

- 10.12 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (PPG3) directs the delivery of housing through the Planning System on the basis of "Plan, Monitor and Manage". This approach places priority on the use of previously developed (brownfield) land and buildings and creates an expectation that where greenfield land is to be developed to meet housing needs it is carefully managed. Greenfield sites are a limited resource and best use should be made of them, but it is also recognised that an over supply of greenfield sites will reduce the impetus to develop brownfield sites.
- 10.13 PPG3 also states that local authorities "should manage the release of sites over the plan period in order to control the pattern and speed of urban growth, ensure that the new infrastructure is coordinated with new housing development and deliver the local authority's recycling target" of brownfield land.

**Policy HG3**

The development of sites allocated for housing will be in accordance with the phasing strategy of this policy, which seeks to ensure that priority is given to the development of previously developed brownfield sites and maintaining a sufficient supply of land for residential development.

The Lufton (KS/BRYM/1), Lyde Road (KS/YEWI/1) and Thorne Lane (KS/YEWI/2) key sites and those allocations listed in policy HG2 as being within the established development areas are anticipated to commence development in the first part of the plan period.

Those remaining allocations listed in policy HG2 proposed on greenfield, urban extension sites are phased for development in the period 2007 to 2011.

The performance of the phasing strategy will be kept under review and monitored on an annual basis. Where sites are coming forward at a rate different to that anticipated in this policy or to otherwise meet the community's housing needs sites may be reassigned between planned phases using supplementary planning documents, having regard to the following matters:

- (a) The need to provide sufficient land to meet strategic requirements;
- (b) The contribution to meeting housing needs made by the development of previously used land;
- (c) The need to meet the community's range of housing needs.

10.14 To manage the release of housing sites effectively and help to ensure that planned rates of house building and uptake of previously developed (brownfield) sites are achieved requires regular monitoring and a sound and up-to-date understanding of the capacity of urban areas to provide new homes. The Council has a system for monitoring house building in the District, which collects and publishes a wide range of information. This system will be reviewed and amended as necessary to meet the needs of managing housing site release.

10.15 Where the results of monitoring indicate a significant and persistent gap between planned and actual rates of development, it may be necessary to try to change the rate being delivered in a particular phase by the re-assignment of sites between the phases. The circumstances in which this is most likely to arise are where rates of windfall development

vary considerably from those estimated, or where the timing of allocated sites' availability or the actual rates of development on them is going to result in a significant difference in the yield within a phase. In reaching a decision on the need for re-assignment the Council will take account of the overall situation in terms of dwelling completions and commitments, and the particular circumstances of sites that are central to the achievement of the planned rate.

- 10.16 Where re-assignment is considered to be necessary, the Council's proposals will be brought forward as Supplementary Planning Documents. In preparing such proposals the Council will undertake public consultation that will involve relevant landowners, developers and interest groups as well as the wider public. Any proposals involving the allocation or de-allocation of sites will be dealt with through the Development Plan Documents.

Other Residential Development within the Development Areas of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages

- 10.17 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 deals exclusively with housing. It indicates that Local Plans should give policy criteria against which applications will be considered and to make an allowance for the contribution that will be made by unidentified housing sites, sometimes referred to as "windfall" sites.
- 10.18 The District Council is concerned that new residential development, either "allocated" or "windfall", should create and maintain good living environments and respect the local distinctiveness of the area. Infilling and redevelopment schemes can make an important contribution to new housing requirements and help meet the national planning objectives by ensuring the full and effective use of land of existing built-up areas. Policies ST2 and ST3 list those rural centres and villages which are, in principle, appropriate locations for "windfall" housing development and Table 10.1 above indicates the statistical number of dwellings likely to come forward through this process during the Plan period. However, such possible developments need to take account of the natural and visual character of the surrounding area and the amenity of existing local

residents. Unsympathetic developments can result in the loss of woodland or important open areas, reduce the quality of the local environment or adversely affect the amenity of residents. Accordingly, within the Development Areas of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages (as defined on the Proposals Map) residential development will be permitted if it meets the criteria of Policy ST6 and other policies of this Local Plan.

- 10.19 With respect to residential development, the District Council has prepared residential design guidance (The Design of Residential Areas), which has been published as Supplementary Planning Guidance. This guidance is promoted as best practice and should assist in meeting the criteria of Policy ST6, and may be taken into account as a material consideration in determining planning applications within this District.

Housing Densities

- 10.20 The issue of housing density has always been an important factor in determining the overall character of development in the District's Towns, Rural Centres and Villages. Government guidance through PPG3 requires consideration of density to ensure maximum efficient use of land without "lowering quality". A net density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare will therefore be sought on each new housing development. Net density is defined as including "...only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses." (PPG3 Annexe C – see Glossary for more detailed definition). At places with good public transport accessibility, higher densities will be sought. On larger developments, such as the Key Site proposals, a range of densities may be appropriate and an average net density of 30 dwellings per hectare will be sought for the site as a whole. PPG3 also places a strong emphasis on the need to design for quality. This should ensure that the general design of development is in sympathy with its locality, so contributing towards overall urban design and sustainability objectives.

**Policy HG4**

**To make more efficient use of land new housing development should be developed**

at a (net) density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare and at higher densities at places with good public transport accessibility.

#### Extensions and Alterations to Rural Buildings Converted to Dwellings

- 10.21 One of the main functions of countryside policies is to protect the landscape from unacceptable new buildings and from the introduction of new uses which would generate high levels of activity to the detriment of the rural character of the area. Planning permission is only given to the conversion of some rural buildings to dwellings, where the building is suitable for conversion without excessive alteration, rebuilding and/or extension and where the criteria set out by the Joint Structure Plan Review and Local Plan policies are met.
- 10.22 Once the building is converted, it is important that its external appearance and setting are maintained in order to protect the amenity and character of the rural area. This is particularly pertinent in the case of historic farm buildings. In order to do so, the District Council may control the future development of such dwellings by the removal of permitted development rights in respect of future alterations, the extension to the buildings, the structures and other domestic paraphernalia within the curtilage. Policy ST4 in Chapter 2 deals further with this matter.

#### Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

- ~~10.23 Whilst new residential development in the countryside is not normally permitted other than, for example, agricultural or forestry workers' dwellings, it is recognised that there may be cases where existing dwellings are in a poor condition and could reasonably be replaced and improve the housing stock on a one for one basis.~~
- ~~10.24 This is especially true for the South Hill locality, which consists of a loose scatter of dwellings in open countryside some 1½ miles south west of Somerton. Many of the dwellings are elderly, of poor construction and in a poor condition. Some of the householders are believed to have some involvement in small~~

~~holdings attached to their properties. Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7) advises that new houses in the countryside should be strictly controlled and require special justification. This Council is of the opinion that to simply discourage the maintenance and modernisation of existing properties in poor condition would perpetuate the low standards of amenity and living conditions of their residents. Consequently, the District Council's policy is to continue to allow the replacement of existing buildings at South Hill (as is the case in the Langport and Somerton Local Plan (1993)) and on other similar areas within the District on a "one for one" basis, subject to strict conditions to improve the general appearance of the area.~~

- ~~10.25 A replacement dwelling should not be significantly larger than the one being replaced; consequently the criterion for increasing floor area is small so that it ensures a variety of dwelling sizes will be retained in the housing stock. Increasing the floor area of a dwelling by either 15% (which is based on permitted development rights as contained under Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order 1995) or to a total floor area of 93 square metres will increase the dwelling marginally. Floor area should not be confused with the footprint of the building or its plot size; for example the floor area of a two storey property would be the combined floor area of the first and ground floor. The proposed new dwelling should be designed to a high standard and respect the character of the rural area. Proposals for replacement dwellings will only be acceptable if they relate to existing buildings and have not been abandoned or are not the result of temporary planning permissions. Such an approach, as outlined above, will also ensure that there are a variety of sizes of dwellings in the rural housing stock. However, "mobile" homes are normally temporary in nature and will not be regarded as suitable for replacement by permanent dwellings.~~

#### **Policy HG5**

**The replacement of an existing dwelling (other than a "mobile" home) outside the development areas of towns, rural centres**

~~and villages will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:~~

- ~~1. It is a one for one replacement.~~
- ~~2. The design and siting of the replacement dwelling satisfactorily respects the character of the area.~~
- ~~3. The existing dwelling has not become derelict or ruinous.~~
- ~~4. To avoid new dwellings disproportionately larger than the original, and to minimise any additional impact upon its surroundings, the floor area of the new dwelling should not exceed
 
  - ~~i) 93 sq metres in total; or~~
  - ~~ii) An increase in 15% over the original dwelling, whichever is the larger.~~~~

- ~~10.26 The limitation on the floor area of the new dwelling is to ensure that over development of the site is prevented, and that the new dwelling involves only a modest change in terms of its form, massing, scale and general design, compared with the original dwelling.~~

#### Housing for Disabled People - Accessible Dwellings

- 10.27 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) recognises that the development of land and buildings provides an opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone, which includes wheelchair users and other people with disabilities, elderly people and those with young children.
- 10.28 The Office of Population Census and Surveys (OPCS) (now called Office of National Statistics ONS) 'Prevalence of Disability Amongst Adults Report', 1988 found that 14% of adults nation-wide had at least one form of disability. In South Somerset the District Council Local Needs Assessment identified 14.4% of all households in the District having one or more special needs involving those who were frail, elderly, physically disabled, have impaired vision or vulnerable young people. More recent figures (2001) show that 17.4% of the District's population had long

term limiting illness, with 2.6% out of work due to being permanently sick/disabled. The intention of the District Council is to ensure that new housing will contribute to meeting the needs of people whose mobility is impaired and enable them to live as independently as possible in the community. The desirable target is that all new housing should be designed to a standard that makes this possible, a concept sometimes termed 'life time homes'. This will allow people whose mobility is impaired more choice of housing and will reduce public and private expenditure on costly adaptations when people become disabled. It will also enable people whose mobility is impaired to visit other people in their homes, and such housing also has the benefit of being more user friendly to other residents, such as those with prams and pushchairs. Sites normally located close to shops and public transport and in an area of level ground are suitable sites.

- 10.29 The District Council will seek to negotiate on suitable sites for the provision of all new housing units with a ground floor entrance or accesses by lift to be built to be suitable for visitors in wheelchairs and capable of adaptation to suit most people with disabilities. Conversions and alterations should also be designed to conform as far as practicable to these standards.

#### Housing for Disabled People - Wheelchair Housing

- 10.30 Wheelchair housing is housing needed by people who are permanently dependent on wheelchairs for mobility, estimated to be 2%-3% of all people with disabilities. It generally needs to be on one level (hilly sites are generally unsuitable) and, in addition to easy access, it has above average space standards to allow for full wheelchair manoeuvre throughout. HDD Occasional Paper 2/75 "Wheelchair Housing" sets down standards for buildings to be used as wheelchair housing.
- 10.31 There is little housing suitable for people who permanently use a wheelchair and very little choice in housing type and tenures. Because there is an additional cost in providing the more generous than average space standards required, it is appropriate that wheelchair

housing is provided only in larger housing schemes and the Council will liaise with Social Services to ascertain local need. Certain sites may be unsuitable for such provision by virtue of an isolated location or where there are overwhelming conservation considerations. The converse is that sites normally located close to shops and in an area of level ground are suitable sites

- 10.32 The District Council will seek to negotiate for the provision of new housing on suitable sites to be capable, without further structural alteration, to meet the needs of those dependent on wheelchairs for mobility. These units should be evenly distributed throughout the development and should cater for a varying number of occupants. A percentage of such units will be sought where there is clear evidence of local need.

Affordable Housing Within New Housing Developments

- 10.33 Government Guidance in Circular 6/98 and PPG 3 makes clear that the community's need for affordable housing is a material consideration to be taken into account in local plans and that local plan policies should reflect an understanding of the needs of the area over the development plan period. PPG 3 makes clear that local plan policies should be informed by local housing need assessments which should assess the range of needs for different types and sizes of housing across all tenures in their area. To this end the district council commissioned a district-wide Housing Need Survey and Assessment which was received in March 2000. This was updated in June 2002. In accord with government advice this plan will:

- define affordable housing
- indicate how many affordable houses need to be provided for the district and for specific sites
- consider site thresholds for seeking affordable housing
- establish the council's intention to negotiate affordable housing provision through both allocated and windfall housing developments

- consider circumstances where commutation of housing need requirement may be appropriate
- promote the use of empty properties to meet housing need, and consider exceptions for sites in rural areas.

- 10.34 The definition of affordable housing and the district and site targets are derived from the evidence and information contained in the Housing Needs Assessment detailed above, as updated in 2002, and will be further updated at regular intervals throughout the life of this local plan.

Definition and Achievement of Affordable Housing

- 10.35 The Housing Need Assessment Report defines affordable housing as housing for those households unable to afford market priced housing either to rent or purchase who are in unsuitable housing, or households sharing a dwelling when they require to move to separate accommodation, or homeless. Housing may be unsuitable because of its size, type, design, location, security, cost or physical condition. Homeless households are clearly identifiable and in obvious housing need.

- 10.36 Implicit in this definition is the element of subsidy required to make such housing accessible to households in need. This subsidy is normally achieved through land price in order to achieve affordability. The land prices to make a scheme affordable may, for example, be zero, at agricultural value, or at serviced plot value depending on the circumstances of the scheme.

- 10.37 Following the updating of information on prices, rents, earnings and income and the application of the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) promoted Basic Needs Assessment Model and the council's Housing Need Survey update of 2002, the district-wide target for the provision of affordable housing during the remaining plan period is set at 262 per annum. Included within this total is the intention to address the identified backlog housing need over the plan period.

- 10.38 By discounting supply from non planning sources (such as 100% RSL development, purchase of existing stock, conversions, change of use, homebuy and other initiatives) and affordable housing committed from planning sources at the base date for calculation, a figure for new build affordable housing in association with planning applications for general housing can be derived. Undertaking the calculation for a September 2001 base date produces an annual district-wide new build requirement in association with applications for general building of 185 dwellings per annum.
- 10.39 The update addresses the extent to which the various types of housing (low cost market, shared ownership and social rented) meet affordable housing need. The outcome of the analysis is that low cost market housing (significantly discounted at 20% of average new build prices) will not meet any housing need as it will still be more expensive than the minimum market (second hand) prices. Should a considerably greater discount be provided by builders then it may be possible that discounted low cost market housing might meet some element of affordable housing. It is not considered that a greater discount would materialise or be practical for housebuilders to achieve.
- 10.40 The 2002 Housing Need Survey update's estimated outgoings for shared ownership housing are less than those for market priced housing and it is therefore likely that some households in need will be able to have their needs met by this form of housing. This is estimated to be around 10% of the total amount of affordable housing need with the rest being provided by social rented housing.
- 10.41 These findings of the 2002 Housing Need Survey update are not prescriptive but serve to inform negotiations to achieve the district's affordable housing target. It is recognised that as external factors change so can the relative merits of the different forms of tenure in meeting affordable housing needs and the choice of appropriate tenure will therefore be made on a site by site basis.
- 10.42 The funding resources set aside as a result of Housing Stock transfer in 1999 for the provision of new build social housing amount to some 800 dwellings over an 8 year period from 1999. Based on past evidence one might expect 150 additional units to be provided from Housing Corporation funding over the same period. Whilst funding for affordable housing in the latter part of the plan period cannot be identified with much certainty at this stage it is not unreasonable, given the council's track record, that appropriate funding for the remaining years of the plan would be forthcoming to achieve most, if not all, the district-wide target for affordable housing (including affordable housing to be promoted in association with general housing development.)
- 10.43 There is sufficient scope within the local plan allocations and anticipated windfall provision to achieve almost all the district-wide target given the site targets and thresholds adopted below. The Housing Need Assessment and 2002 update identify the highest priority housing need is for social housing normally to be provided by Registered Social Landlords and this is reaffirmed in the Housing Strategy. Affordable housing will be secured in accordance with the requirements of Circular 6/98. This will generally be secured through a Registered Social Landlord or other suitable affordable housing provider, and any necessary restriction in terms of future occupancy will be controlled through obligations and conditions where appropriate. Where strict occupancy controls are imposed, the council will ensure that arrangements are legally binding so that the housing is occupied as intended, but will also take into account the needs of developers and Registered Social Landlords who must ensure that schemes are financially viable – including the need to raise development finance – and who may need to operate within certain time limits.

#### Policy HG6

The council will seek to achieve a total target of 2,065 affordable homes to 2011. This equates to an annual target of 262 homes per annum, over the 8.75 years to 2011, of which 185 per annum will be required in association with general housing.

Site Targets and Thresholds

- 10.44 The site target for affordable housing is determined by identifying the annual district new affordable housing (in association with general housing) requirement (185 dwellings) as a proportion of annual future total housing provision that is above site thresholds for seeking affordable housing. The annual future housing provision amounts to 493 dwellings at a September 2001 base date when thresholds of 25 dwellings on settlements over 3,000 and 15 dwellings on smaller settlements are applied. 185 dwellings as a proportion of the anticipated 493 dwelling provision amounts to a 37.5% target.
- 10.45 Circular 6/98 provides for site threshold levels to be reduced where exceptional local constraints can be demonstrated. It is not considered that these exist in the district. In any event, reductions of site thresholds would only marginally increase provision, which is very much focused in on the council's Key Sites. It might also prove very difficult to bring forward affordable housing on small rural sites, in locations which are not necessarily very sustainable or practical for those on low incomes. For these reasons the council does not intend to reduce site thresholds.
- 10.46 Because of concerns about the adequacy of funding over the plan period and about the viability of individual sites, the site targets are set at 35%. The underlying calculations in the Needs Assessment and update cannot be an exact science. The figure is rounded downwards to reflect these concerns to 35%. This figure gives a robust basis on which the council can base its requirements and consider the circumstances of individual sites. If achieved on all sites it would only marginally under-provide in terms of the district-wide annual requirement.
- 10.47 Accordingly, the 35% site target for affordable housing is an appropriate target, which will ensure that something very close to the district-wide target can be achieved through the local plan allocations and likely forthcoming supply from windfall sites (above the relevant site thresholds). The site target should form the basis of negotiations for the inclusion of affordable housing within new

housing development. The site target percentage for affordable housing will provide guidance for detailed negotiations on planning applications. The district-wide Housing Need Assessment Report and update in 2002, which underscore the policy targets and thresholds, is available for inspection. It will be updated to accord with Government guidance that housing assessments shall be kept up-to-date during the plan period.

- 10.48 Where it is demonstrated that the provision of affordable housing, along with other infrastructure and community facilities renders a site unviable the council will reconsider the planning obligations, including affordable housing, to be sought from the site. But the district council will wish to see development in accord with local plan policies proceed as long as the necessary infrastructure, services and community facilities are secured.
- 10.49 Affordable housing achieved on site will normally be subject to arrangements that will ensure that the benefits are passed on to successive, as well as, initial occupiers, subject to 'Right to Acquire' housing legislation in the 1996 Housing Act.
- 10.50 When the district council seek to negotiate an element of affordable housing in respect of development which already meet a specified housing need, such as sheltered housing for the elderly, the council shall take into account the fact that such sites (if less than 1 hectare in size) may be inappropriate for a mix of affordable and general sheltered housing units.
- 10.51 The suitability of sites for providing affordable housing will be determined by reference to Circular 6/98 and in particular paragraph 10 of that Circular.

**Policy HG7**

**The council will seek to achieve 35% of the total number of dwellings as affordable housing on suitable sites:**

- **On sites of 25 dwellings or more (or 1 hectare irrespective of the number of dwellings) in settlements larger than 3,000 population**

- On sites of 15 dwellings or more (or 0.5 hectares irrespective of the number of dwellings) in settlements of 3,000 or less.

Note: settlement populations are numbered in terms of people living within defined development areas of settlements and not parish populations

#### Commutation of Requirement

- 10.52 Government guidance makes clear that local authorities may consider it to be preferable on certain sites, above the threshold sizes, to obtain a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing on a different site in the local authority's area. However, the guidance is equally clear that the release of a site where a local planning authority has decided that an element of affordable housing should be pursued, without ensuring the provision of that housing on the land in question may undermine the objectives of government policy. These are identified in Circular 6/98 as the incorporation of a reasonable mix and balance of house types and sizes to cater for a range of housing need and that land should be released on the basis that it will meet the housing needs that actually exist in the plan area. The Circular makes clear that proximity to facilities, services and public transport and the desirability for a mix of affordable housing types on successful housing developments are important factors to take into account when determining the provision of affordable housing on new sites above the relevant threshold. Where these criteria are met on both allocated and windfall sites, the provision of affordable housing will be provided on the sites in question and commutation will not be sought. The housing allocations in the plan, which meet these criteria, have been identified and commutation will not be sought on these sites.
- 10.53 For a commutation scheme to prove acceptable to the local planning authority, the developer should provide an alternative site (to meet the full affordable housing target of 35% for the original site) on which the affordable houses can be built. The site must be acceptable in terms of local plan policies and, in particular, its environmental impact and

housing need (both numbers and type of dwellings) and should be in proximity to community services, public facilities and public transport. The site should be serviced, or capable of being serviced, at reasonable cost and must have the benefit of planning permission. In the case of social housing, arrangements must be made to ensure the transfer of the site to a Registered Social Landlord, or other suitable affordable housing provider, at a discounted value such that affordable rented housing can be achieved. Upon securing these requirements, planning permission can then be considered for the original site, as part of the overall commuted scheme. The greater amount of market housing achievable on sites where commutation is acceptable will be taken into account when determining the amount of affordable housing sought.

#### Policy HG8

Where a requirement for an element of affordable housing is appropriate it should be provided as part of the proposed development. However, if the council and the developer both consider that, on particular sites where a requirement for affordable housing would be appropriate, it is nonetheless preferable that a financial or other contribution should be made towards the provision of the element of affordable housing on another site in the local area a commutation of affordable housing will be considered. An example of when this might be appropriate is where its provision on site will result in an unbalanced housing mix in the locality."

#### Rural Housing Needs

- 10.54 Current Government guidance makes clear that there can be occasions when sites can be released for housing as an exception to normal planning policy to provide affordable housing where a local housing need assessment demonstrates that there is a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs. Government guidance seeks such housing to be available in perpetuity. Accordingly, only social housing as defined in paragraph 10.35 above can be considered as affordable

housing for the purposes of this exception policy.

- 10.55 Relaxation of normal restrictive open countryside development policies is inappropriate where a suitable site(s) to meet local need is (are) available within the Development Area of a village. In these circumstances need can be met without requiring development in the open countryside. This Policy should only apply in rural areas in settlements of 3,000 or less and such sites should be located within or adjoining existing villages. Clear evidence of local need to justify an exception to normal policy will be required and local will be defined as the Parish or the Parish and immediately adjoining Parishes. A specific localised Housing Need Survey may be required to be undertaken by the developer, registered social landlord or any other relevant party. The purpose of such a survey will be to confirm the existence of localised housing need.
- 10.56 The District Council will give priority to people in housing need within the Parish in question or within contiguous Parishes when determining or negotiating occupancy in housing granted as an exception to normal policy.
- 10.57 Mixed development consisting of high value market housing used to offset a lower return on social housing on the same site is not appropriate for exception sites.
- 10.58 The qualifying figure of 3,000 population for settlements below which rural exception sites can be considered derives from Government guidance which stipulates the figure of 3,000 as a determining figure at which the different thresholds for affordable housing apply. Additionally, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions has used this figure to define rural areas in relation to 'Right to Acquire' legislation embodied in the Housing Act 1996 (Housing, Right to Acquire or Enfranchise, Designated Rural Areas Orders 1996).
- 10.59 Affordable housing on rural exception sites must be secured on a long term basis and the District Council will require appropriate management arrangements to be entered into

to ensure such housing is provided in perpetuity at a level below market value or market rents for local people. Affordable housing on rural exception sites will not be considered against the identified District housing requirement.

#### Policy HG9

The District Council may relax normal restrictive open countryside development policies to permit affordable housing within and adjoining settlements of less than 3,000 population, where there is no suitable site within the development area of the settlement and subject to the suitability of identified site in terms of environmental impact and the availability of necessary infrastructure.

A local need (as defined in the notes to this policy) for such housing must be proven and appropriate management arrangements will be sought to ensure the long term availability of affordable housing. Such provision will be additional to the overall district housing allocation.

#### Notes:

- (i) Affordable housing is defined for the purposes of the exception policy as social housing as defined in paragraph 10.35 only.
- (ii) Local need in relation to exception sites means the need in a parish or group of contiguous parishes located around one central parish (but excluding settlements of larger than 3,000 dwellings).
- (iii) Indicators to be used in defining local need within the parish or group of parishes are:
  - Existing residents needing separate accommodation in the area (new couples, people leaving tied accommodation on retirement);
  - People whose work provides important services and who need to live closer to the local community;
  - People who are not necessarily resident locally but have long standing links with the local community, (e.g. Elderly people who needed to move back to a village to be near relatives);

- People with the offer of a job in the locality, who cannot take up the offer because of lack of affordable housing; and
- Existing residents who would otherwise qualify for housing or re-housing under the criteria used by the District Council in respect of its housing register including those who by reason of age, infirmity or disability are in need of special housing.

#### Empty and Underused Properties

10.60 The Government advocates bringing vacant housing sites back into use and the conversion of larger houses into units more suited to smaller households. The conversion of former office or other buildings into housing use is also encouraged. In town centres this is qualified by the need to give priority to employment generating uses such as shopping, leisure and offices especially at ground floor level.

10.61 This Policy is not exclusively concerned with affordable housing provision and will also be relevant in the provision of general market housing. The District Council has undertaken a number of initiatives to bring empty properties back into use and these are supported through the Planning Service.

- *The district council will support the reuse of empty properties and the conversion of underused dwellings or office or other buildings into housing subject to other plan policies.*

#### Living Over the Shop

10.62 It is an objective of the Council to maintain and increase the number of residential properties in the Towns and Rural Centres in the Plan area (see para 10.8). Therefore, the Plan encourages change of use to residential in shopping centres. Most town centres (as defined by Policy MC4) have under-used floor space above ground floor shops and commercial premises. Much was originally in residential use and is now an important potential stock of dwellings. In cases where the

residential use has ceased and no other use made of the premises, planning permission for a change of use to create one residential unit above ground floor level is not required where there is a ground floor window display.

10.63 The provision of new town centre dwellings through the reuse of under-used floor space can provide affordable homes and can bring back life into town centres. It also makes an economic use of existing buildings. In many cases, only modest external alterations are required to buildings to create a new dwelling. However, alterations which damage the character or appearance of listed buildings or a conservation area will not be permitted.

10.64 In most cases new car parking provision will not be required because the existing premises will have their own notional provision. That is to say, the existing use will already have an assumed parking provision. In the case of office uses, this may actually be greater than that required for the new residential use.

#### Sites for Gypsies and Other Travelling People

10.65 The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 repealed the statutory duty on County Councils to provide accommodation for Gypsies and also ended central government funding of site provision. South Somerset has two Gypsy sites established and managed by Somerset County Council under previous legislation. These are at Isle Abbots and Tintinhull and provide a total of 14 pitches. Gypsy families are now encouraged to provide sites for themselves and planning guidance is given in Circular 01/2006. An increase in the number of applications for traveller sites has been noted by the District Council. Circular 01/2006 defines Gypsies and Travellers as "Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such."

10.66 It is recognised that there will be very few suitable, or affordable, sites within the

Development Areas of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages and therefore provision will mainly be sought in the countryside. As with other forms of development, the reuse of derelict or unused sites will be encouraged. Other Local Plan and Joint Structure Plan Review policies seek to protect the countryside from harmful development, and these will be given full consideration when determining planning applications. However it should also be recognised that a special need does exist for the provision of sites in Somerset as illustrated by the general lack of legal sites and attempts by the County Council to provide emergency accommodation for Travellers. In accordance with recent court rulings the personal circumstances of the applicants will also be taken into consideration when a decision is finely balanced. When planning permission is sought to establish a traveller site, it is strongly recommended that early pre-application discussions and negotiations are carried out with the District Council. On some occasions the need for a site and the special circumstances of an applicant may be deemed to outweigh the potential harm, for example visual intrusion, caused by allowing a development. However, each case will necessarily be judged on its merits.

- 10.67 Any new sites for Gypsies or other travelling people should have good vehicular access and be *reasonably* convenient for schools and other community facilities such as public transport, shops, health centres and public telephones. Potential nuisance to neighbours from vehicle movements, or business activity will be taken into consideration. Sites should be suitably landscaped when permanent, rather than temporary, planning permissions are granted.

#### Transit/short stay sites

- 10.68 Applications will be received for both transit/short stay sites and long term/residential sites. Transit sites will meet the needs of those passing through the district, with no long term occupation and will therefore require only a basic level of services including a water stand pipe, waste skip and a chemical toilet disposal point or composting toilet. In order to minimise their environmental and visual impact it is envisaged that these

sites will only be occupied for nine months of the year and will be restricted to a maximum of ten accommodation spaces. For the remaining three months of the year the site will be cleared and given a chance to recover from any overuse.

#### Policy HG10

Proposals for short-term/transit sites for gypsies and other travelling people will be permitted outside of areas of open land where development is severely restricted, such as AONBs and SSSIs provided that:

1. Vehicle movements, noise, or fumes would not harm the residential amenities of any neighbouring dwellings or the character of the area;
2. The site is reasonably related to community facilities;
3. No serious highway problem would result;
4. The site includes the following facilities:
  1. A refuse collection point.
  2. Access to a drinking water supply.
  3. A satisfactory means of sewage disposal/management.
  4. A drained and stable surface.

#### Long Term/Residential Sites

- 10.69 Long term/residential sites catering for those gypsies or travellers who reside in the district for longer periods will require a higher standard of services. Some sites could also usefully combine transit and long term accommodation, a solution favoured by many of the travelling communities as an element of stability and self management is introduced into site provision.

#### Policy HG11

Proposals for residential/long term sites will be permitted outside of areas of open land where development is severely

restricted, such as AONBs and SSSIs provided that :

1. Vehicle movements, noise, fumes or any subsidiary business activities would not harm the residential amenities of neighbouring dwellings or the character of the area.
2. The site is reasonably well related to schools and other community facilities.
3. No serious highway problem would result.
4. The site includes the following facilities:
  1. A refuse collection point.
  2. Access to a drinking water supply.
  3. A satisfactory means of sewage disposal/management and surface water disposal.
  4. Hardstanding for living vehicles and ancillary parking spaces.
  5. A defined safe play area for children.

#### Low Impact Dwelling Sites

- 10.70 Some travelling people and others who wish to have an environmentally low impact lifestyle live in traditional "benders" or yurts which are temporary structures for which no conventional foundations are required and are made of natural materials. In recent years the District Council has received planning applications for these low impact dwellings. Without clear planning policy these applications have only been considered in terms of special need and personal circumstance which can lead to an inconsistent approach and outcome. Policy HG12 seeks to provide consistency of approach whilst dealing with unauthorised settlements.
- 10.71 These dwellings present low environmental impact, as they combine-low visual impact with the use of renewable or local materials for construction of the dwellings and low resource use in everyday living. Facilities will be provided on site and works to connect the site

to the utilities i.e. drainage, electricity, along with road works with metalled surfaces should not be carried out. Structures such as cabins and caravans are not included under this policy as they are the subject of separate and appropriate legislation. On the removal of permitted structures, regeneration of the site to its former condition normally occurs over three to six months. As this policy covers a departure from the more usual forms of dwelling provision, permissions will only be granted on a temporary basis.

- 10.72 Suitable, affordable sites within the defined Development Areas of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages for this type of accommodation will be hard to find and it is therefore recognised that sites will be sought in the countryside. Whilst residential development in the countryside is strictly controlled, the District Council recognises that this form of dwelling does not have the environmental or visual impact of conventional housing and can be considered as a sustainable means of providing accommodation. It is also recognised that this is a lifestyle which will be chosen by relatively few people. Therefore it is possible to accommodate this type of dwelling in the countryside without causing demonstrable harm. Sites will not be considered appropriate in areas of open land where development is strictly limited e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 10.73 Where low impact dwellings cause minimal visual or environmental harm or harm to the residential amenity of adjacent properties and where the site can be restored to its former condition when occupation ceases, there will be no objection in principle. Although the dwellings themselves may have relatively little visual or environmental impact, care must be taken to ensure that no harm is caused by associated requirements such as vehicular access and car parking, sheds and domestic paraphernalia. To help ensure that this is the case, all permitted development rights will be removed from the site. The site must also meet required environmental health standards. The District Council will seek to establish criteria which can be used to evaluate the success or otherwise of low impact dwelling sites.

### Policy HG12

Proposals for low impact dwelling sites will not be permitted unless:

1. All structures are temporary bender or yurt type structures, are not visually intrusive and their removal will allow regeneration of the site.
2. Vehicle movements, noise, fumes or any subsidiary business activities would not harm the residential amenities of neighbouring dwellings or the character of the area.
3. The site is reasonably well related to schools and other community facilities.
4. No serious highway problem would result.
5. The site includes the following facilities:
  1. A refuse collection point.
  2. Access to a drinking water supply.
  3. A satisfactory means of sewage disposal/management and surface water disposal.
6. Landscaping schemes and/or land management are provided if appropriate.

All permissions granted will be temporary to allow for review and assessment of the impact of the site.

- 10.74 The District Council has previously received applications for low impact dwellings in conjunction with agriculture/permaculture proposals. Proposals for permanent structures connected with agricultural use will be considered under usual countryside/housing policies. When agricultural use is submitted as a part of an application, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that it is sustainable and viable to support all persons concerned. However it should be borne in mind that the income sought to sustain this lifestyle will be considerably less than is sought through mainstream agriculture to maintain more conventional lifestyles.

### Sites for Travelling Show People

~~10.75 Government Advice about planning considerations relating to travelling show people is contained within Circular 22/91. Sites for travelling show people combine residential, storage and maintenance uses. Typically, a site comprises areas set aside for accommodation, often caravans or mobile homes, which may be occupied permanently by older family members and children, and areas where vehicles and fair ground equipment can be stored, repaired and tested. This means that sites do not fit easily into existing land use categories.~~

~~10.76 The District Council has identified all sites for travelling show people which have planning permission and has consulted the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain, as to whether there is any need for additional provision. There is no evidence of any need, at present, and therefore no sites will be allocated.~~

~~10.77 Any new sites for travelling show people should be reasonably flat, have good vehicular access and be reasonably convenient for schools and other community facilities. Potential nuisance to neighbours from vehicle movements or maintenance and testing of equipment will be taken into consideration.~~

### Policy HG13

~~Proposals for sites for travelling show people will be permitted provided that:~~

- ~~1. They would not affect the amenity of other users of land by virtue of vehicular movements, noise and fumes on the testing and maintenance of machinery.~~
- ~~2. The site is reasonably related to school and other community facilities.~~
- ~~3. The site does not encroach visually into the open countryside and is substantially screened and landscaped.~~
- ~~4. The site includes a refuse collection point, access to a drinking water supply and has an acceptable means~~

~~of sewage and surface water disposal/management.~~

- ~~10.78 The special land use nature of sites for travelling show people is such that they should be retained in that particular use. The loss of such sites, and the acknowledged difficulty that show people have experienced in obtaining planning permission for new sites, means that existing sites should be given protection from redevelopment. There may be circumstances where the relocation of a site would have environmental benefits. However, unless there is no need for such accommodation within the Plan area, it will be expected that a suitable replacement will be made.~~

**Policy HG14**

~~Proposals for redevelopment of existing sites for travelling show people to other uses will not be permitted, unless equal provision is made elsewhere and redevelopment would constitute an environmental improvement, or where there is no need or demand for the existing site.~~

Agricultural and Forestry Dwellings

- 10.79 In accordance with Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7), new agricultural or forestry dwellings are one of the few circumstances where new house building in the open countryside may be justified. In determining planning applications for such dwellings Annex A of PPS7 advises local planning authorities to apply functional and financial tests. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: DEFRA) produced advice to assist in assessing details of an enterprise.
- 10.80 The Local Planning Authority will consider the needs of the enterprise concerned and not those of the potential owner or occupier. Planning permission will only be granted for dwellings essential to the enterprise concerned and where the enterprise is financially viable. Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the agricultural needs of the unit, or are unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income that unit can sustain in

the long term, will not normally be permitted. Where evidence of need is inconclusive, temporary planning permission may be granted for temporary accommodation on a new farm unit, to allow the validity of the proposal to be tested over a reasonable time. It will be unsatisfactory to grant successive extensions to a temporary permission over a period of more than three years, so a reasonable period of time to test the validity of any proposal will be a maximum three years. Where proposals are deemed invalid, the Local Planning Authority will require temporary accommodation to be removed and the site restored.

- 10.81 The Local Planning Authority will seek expert advice on the functional requirements of the agricultural holding when considering proposals for new agricultural or forestry dwellings. Where a function test is not conclusive, it will favour proposals which can demonstrate, by financial evidence, that there is a genuine ability to engage in farming or forestry and that the new dwelling is required to support the new enterprise. Accordingly, the applicant is expected to submit evidence on both functional need for the dwelling on the agricultural unit and evidence as to the long term financial viability of the unit. An occupancy condition will be attached to any planning permission granted, to ensure that the dwelling is kept available to meet justified need.
- 10.82 The fragmentation of agricultural estates into small holdings brings with it the risk that demand for additional farm buildings and new dwellings in the countryside will follow. This detracts from the character of the landscape. Therefore, the Local Planning Authority will require evidence that there is an overriding agricultural need for a new dwelling which cannot be met from the existing stock of dwellings.

**Policy HG15**

**Proposals for agricultural or forestry worker dwellings will only be permitted in the countryside where:**

1. **The dwelling is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise**

so that one or more workers would be readily available at most times. In cases where a functional test alone is not conclusive, it may be appropriate also to apply a financial test;

2. The need is for accommodation for a full-time worker, or one primarily employed in agriculture;
3. No other housing accommodation is available for occupation locally by the worker concerned that would fulfil the functional need;
4. The necessary accommodation cannot be provided by the conversion of an existing building or structure on the holding.

Dwellings that are unusually large in relation to the agricultural needs of the unit or are unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income of the unit in the longer term will not be permitted.

Where there is inconclusive evidence supporting the need, temporary planning permission may be granted for temporary accommodation on a new farm unit, to allow three years to test the viability of the proposal.

The renewal of a temporary planning permission for temporary accommodation will not be granted if the case for permanent accommodation has not been made by the end of the temporary period.

A condition will be attached to any planning permission granted to ensure that

the dwelling is kept available to meet the justified need. A planning obligation will be sought where a planning condition would not keep the dwelling available to meet the justified need.

- 10.83 Applications for the removal of occupancy conditions will be considered on the basis of a realistic assessment of the continuing need for the dwelling for the occupants solely, mainly or last working in agriculture in the area as a whole, and not just the needs of a particular holding. Applicants will have to demonstrate that there is no need for the agriculturally restricted dwelling in the area and have regard to other agriculturally restricted dwellings in the area.

#### Policy HG16

Proposals for the removal of agricultural or forestry occupancy conditions will only be permitted where:

1. The restricted occupancy dwelling is not needed to meet the needs of agricultural or forestry business in the area as a whole and not just the particular relevant holding.
2. The property concerned has been appropriately marketed for a reasonable period of time, taking into account resale price, the condition of the dwelling and the likely price which an agricultural/forestry worker could pay for the actual value of the property.