

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
17 March 2015

Subject: SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS – DRAFT INTERIM POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE

**All Wards outside North York Moors National Park
Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Planning Services: Councillor B Phillips**

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for an Interim Planning Policy Guidance Note aimed at providing more flexibility towards development, particularly housing development, within smaller settlements in the District.
- 1.2 The Draft Interim Policy Guidance Note (Annex 'B') has been subject to a six week consultation period which closed on 23 January 2015. A summary of the responses is included at Annex 'A'. 196 responses were received, indicating there is support for the Council's approach to new housing development by creating more opportunities in the smaller settlements. Copies of responses are available in the Members' Lounge.

2.0 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION:

- 2.1 Comments regarding a 5% cap or guide to the scale of development indicate that this approach does not align with the National Planning Policy Framework, which contains no such restriction. Consideration has been given to this and a definition of 'small scale' has replaced the reference to a percentage figure. It is important that the definition of small scale represents the type and form of development appropriate to the District.
- 2.2 Several responses referred to the concentration of new 'small scale' development on one single site and how this would not reflect organic growth. Small scale development should enable the village to evolve slowly, representing the traditional pattern of growth, resulting in high quality designed buildings appropriate to their setting. The description of small scale development has been amended to account for this approach, taking into consideration the form and character of each individual settlement.
- 2.3 The Draft Note defined 'Other Settlements' with a requirement for "an identifiable sense of community". There were several criticisms of this term indicating that a 'sense of community' is difficult to define. Therefore, this has been removed from the revised note. The defined 'Other Settlements' are retained in a list form at Annex 'C'.
- 2.4 There was support for the use of 'Cluster Villages' to enable the consideration of sustainable groups of settlements. The Draft Note has been amended to enable Other Settlements to form a cluster without the need for one of them to be a Service or Secondary Village, where together they provide a good level of service provision. The Draft Note has also been amended to remove the requirement for 'significant support' for local services as this was thought to be unjustified and not in alignment with national guidance.
- 2.5 The Draft Note has been redrafted to include criteria by which an application will be considered and there is an explanation and justification of each criterion. The criteria have largely been drawn from key planning considerations identified in the Local Development

Framework and in national planning policy. Once approved, the Note will be used by Development Management in the consideration of applications outside defined Development Limits within the District's rural villages. Whilst the Note will not carry as much weight as adopted Local Plan policy, it will be a material consideration in the planning process and will align Hambleton's approach with national guidance.

2.6 It is envisaged that the Interim Policy Guidance Note will be in place until the new Local Plan is prepared.

3.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

3.1 The review of the Settlement Hierarchy and the introduction of an Interim Policy Guidance Note for new housing in the rural areas have several links to corporate priorities, for example it would support sustainable economic growth and development and help to meet housing needs of all sections of local communities as well as helping to maintain and enhance local services and facilities.

4.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

4.1 There are no significant risks in approving the Interim Policy Guidance Note

4.2 The key risks in not approving the recommendation are shown below:-

Risk	Implication	Prob*	Imp*	Total	Preventative action
Development Plan policy is out of date.	Decisions are open to challenge on appeal with the potential of costs against the Council.	4	3	12	Implement the approach of the Interim Policy Guidance Note.
The Council is not supporting sustainable development in rural areas.	Communities and services and facilities become unsustainable.	4	3	12	Implement the approach of the Interim Policy Guidance Note.

Prob = Probability, Imp = Impact, Score range is Low = 1, High = 5

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 The revised Interim Policy Guidance Note (see Annex 'B') will increase planning application fees and pre-application advice receipts for the Council. Allowing more housing to be built will increase New Homes Bonus and Council Tax payments to the Council, as well as receipts from the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 The Interim Policy Guidance Note cannot be given the same weight in planning decisions as up-to-date and adopted Local Plan policy or national policies but weight can be attached to it as a material consideration, provided it is consistent with these.

7.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:

7.1 None.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 8.1 That Cabinet approves and recommends to Council that the Interim Policy Guidance Note be approved for use in the Development Management.

MICK JEWITT

Background papers: Local Development Framework Core Strategy, 2007
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012
Consultation Responses

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Summary of Consultation

Background

In Spring 2013 a survey was sent to all Parish Council's within the District, including those within the North York Moors National Park to gain information relating to services and facilities within their settlements. This information fed into an assessment which gave a points score to each settlement to be used to inform further work on the Settlement Hierarchy and the Draft Audit of Village Services.

In July 2014 the Draft Audit of Village Services report was sent to all Parish Councils to ensure that the information they had previously provided was correct. The report outlined the methodology for assessing the sustainability level of a settlement using the scoring system. The settlements were then ranked in order of Service Village, Secondary Village and Other Settlement. A questionnaire was also sent, which asked questions relating to new housing development within rural settlements and aligning Core Policy CP4 of the Core Strategy with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Draft Interim Policy Guidance Note December 2014 – January 2015

On 5th December 2014 a third consultation was undertaken, this time information was sent to all stakeholders on the Planning Policy Consultation Database, which included Statutory consultees, developers, agents and individuals. This enclosed the Draft Interim Policy Guidance Note and the revised Settlement Hierarchy. Views were sought on sustainable development; identifying other settlements; cluster villages; the criteria for considering developments; and the scale of new development.

There were 196 responses to this consultation, 33 of which were Parish Councils/Meetings and 76 of which were from residents of Great Ayton. There was significant support for the creation of more opportunities for development within the smaller settlements and for these to be located within or directly adjoining the core built form of the settlement.

An Annex to the Interim Policy Guidance Note showed how the settlements had been ranked in order and grouped within the hierarchy. This list defined the 'settlements' which the Council consider to have a defined built form. Locations outside of this list would be considered as open countryside for the purpose of the guidance. A significant majority agreed with this approach, however there was some criticism of the definition of 'settlement'.

The definition of 'settlement' included the need to have "a recognisable sense of community". Respondents considered that this term was difficult to quantify and that it gave no real value to the definition.

Many responses listed types of facilities they considered important within a village or to have access to. This corresponds well with the list of facilities within the Audit of Village Services. When asked if there were any other settlements which should appear on the list, a significant majority responded 'no'.

The concept of 'cluster villages' gained significant support as a way to enable small villages with few services to work together to form a group, where the combined level of services would result in a

sustainable settlement. The definition of cluster villages explained how settlements should be accessible between each other, linked by convenient public transport, walking or cycling and where the combined settlements offer a range of services contributing to a sustainable community. This should include the sharing of facilities such as a school, post office, health facility or village shop. The definition stated that if the settlements were over 2km from each other then this could be considered as a barrier between their connection. For respondents, this distance was in some cases too rigid and that a more flexible distance should be used. A selection of additional cluster villages were suggested however the majority of respondents didn't suggest any more.

The guidance note set a number of criteria against which applications would be considered. There was support for this, however there was concern that sites would be developed as a separate housing estate rather than reflecting the historic organic growth of a village. It was argued that this type of development would have an adverse impact on the character and openness of the countryside and the form of an historic village.

The issue of 'small scale' arose in answers to several questions. Along with the other responses, there were 79 from Great Ayton residents which referred mainly to the scale and distribution of 'small scale' development and the impact of this being developed on one site on an edge of settlement location.

There was little support for the use of a 5% guide to new housing, due to this being inconsistent with national policy and not appropriate in all cases, for example 5% within a large village would result in a significant number of new dwellings, whereas 5% in a small village may be more easily integrated. There was greater support for the use of a generic definition of 'small scale' which related to the form and character of each settlement on its own merits.

Copies of all responses to the consultation on the Draft Interim Policy Guidance Note are available in the Member's Lounge.

INTERIM POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE – DEVELOPMENT IN VILLAGES

Introduction

The need for this Interim Policy Guidance Note (Guidance Note) has arisen from Hambleton District Council Members' and community aspirations for more flexibility towards development, particularly housing development, within smaller settlements of the District. Core Policy CP4 'Settlement Hierarchy' of the Local Development Framework (LDF) was written in accordance with National Planning Policy Statements (PPS), which at that time were more restrictive and focused upon sustainable travel than the later National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012), which establishes a more flexible approach with a greater emphasis on the community dimension of sustainable development to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

The Guidance Note does not change adopted policy, but uses the NPPF to bridge that gap between national guidance and adopted Core Policy CP4. The Guidance Note explains what these changes mean in relation to development within Hambleton and the criteria against which applications for Planning Permission will be considered.

In Summer 2013 a survey of Parish Councils was undertaken to update the Settlement Hierarchy contained within Core Policy CP4. This was further informed through consultation in Summer 2014 when Parishes were asked additional questions relating to the future development of their settlements. Further consultation on a Draft Guidance Note took place between December 2014 and January 2015. This work has contributed to the final version of the Guidance Note.

This Guidance Note is intended to demonstrate how Hambleton District Council will consider development in and around smaller settlements both within and outside the hierarchy to ensure it is sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. It takes account of the greater emphasis on the vitality of rural communities introduced by the NPPF and sets out how the Council will assess development proposals in those locations to ensure that its decisions have due regard to the Development Plan and national policy.

The Council is working on a new Local Plan for Hambleton, details of which can be found on the Council's website www.hambleton.gov.uk/planning-policy. Whilst this is in preparation, the Interim Policy Guidance Note explains the Council's approach to new development.

INTERIM POLICY GUIDANCE

Small scale housing development will be supported in villages where it contributes towards achieving sustainable development by maintaining or enhancing the vitality of the local community AND where it meets ALL of the following criteria:

- 1. Development should be located where it will support local services including services in a village nearby.**
- 2. Development must be small in scale, reflecting the existing built form and character of the village.**
- 3. Development must not have a detrimental impact on the natural, built and historic environment.**
- 4. Development should have no detrimental impact on the open character and appearance of the surrounding countryside or lead to the coalescence of settlements.**
- 5. Development must be capable of being accommodated within the capacity of existing or planned infrastructure.**
- 6. Development must conform with all other relevant LDF policies.**

Achieving Sustainable Development

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, it states that where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. However, it remains the Governments policy that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances.

Core Policy CP4 does not allow for new general market housing development in settlements outside of the Settlement Hierarchy and therefore the approach has been adjusted in order to give more to support the sustainability of rural communities. Core Policy CP4 does, however, contain clear exceptions for allowing new homes in the countryside in special circumstances, which remain applicable.

Therefore, this Note sets out the Councils' approach to housing development outside of Development Limits and within the villages which fall outside of the defined Settlement Hierarchy. This Note also updates the Settlement Hierarchy in the table that accompanies LDF Core Policy CP4, based on the 2014 Audit of Village Services Review (see **Annex C**). This will be kept under regular review through the annual Authority Monitoring Report.

1. Supporting Services

The approach to the consideration of new housing development should depend in the first instance on the nature and number of services within the village where the development is proposed. Service Villages and Secondary Villages are considered 'sustainable settlements'. Other Locations (Other Settlements) may also meet the sustainability requirements particularly when considered as a cluster with other villages.

Housing in locations outside of the updated Settlement Hierarchy will not be supported as this would result in isolated dwellings in the countryside, contrary to the NPPF concept of sustainability. This includes very small 'settlements' with a dispersed loose knit form and where there are very few residential buildings, such as a cluster of farmsteads. Only development which meets the exceptions criteria of Core Policy CP4 will be acceptable in such locations. A list of 'settlements' can be found in the Settlement Hierarchy table at Annex C.

NPPF paragraph 55 states that "where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby". Therefore, the concept of Cluster Villages will be used to identify those circumstances where villages have a long association and are linked economically and socially e.g. through the use of primary schools, shops and community facilities and can work together to promote more sustainable living. It is not the intention of this guidance to provide a definitive list of those villages to be considered as Cluster Villages, this will be developed through application of the policy, however the following should be used to guide decision making.

"Cluster Villages should be comprised of nearby settlements, one of which may be a Service or Secondary Village, given the wider level of services available. If Other Settlements are to form a cluster, these must have a good collective level of shared service provision. Settlements should be linked to each other by convenient public transport, walking or cycling, where the combined settlements offer a range of services contributing to a sustainable community. This could include the sharing of facilities such as a school, post office, health facility or village shop. However it is unlikely to constitute a sustainable community if there are very few services or if there are significant distances (approximately 2km) or barriers between settlements (e.g. rivers with no crossing)".

Examples of Cluster Villages include:

Alne & Alne Station
Borrowby & Knayton
Burneston & Carthorpe
Great Broughton & Kirkby in Cleveland
Huby and Sutton on the Forest
Hutton Rudby & Rudby

Ingleby Arncliffe & Ingleby Cross
Kirkby Fleetham & Great/Little Fencote
Leeming & Leeming Bar
Linton on Ouse & Newton on Ouse
Morton on Swale, Ainderby Steeple & Thrintoft
South Otterington & Newby Wiske

Development in villages with no or few services or without convenient access to services in a nearby settlement will not be considered sustainable. With settlements on the edge of the Local Planning Authority area, consideration will be given to their relationship to settlements in neighbouring Districts and the National Park.

2. Scale

Villages within Hambleton are rural in nature, often centred around a Parish Church or green space. Others may be more linear in nature, but all have an historic core around which development has gradually and organically grown to form the villages we see today. This cumulative increase generally results in the creation of unique character and helps contribute towards a sense of place. This is how we envisage further housing growth to occur in Hambleton, being small scale and gradual, reflecting that special character of our historic rural villages.

Therefore, small scale development adjacent to the main built form of a settlement will be supported where it results in incremental and organic growth. As a guide, small scale would normally be considered to comprise up to 5 dwellings. However, each development must be considered on its own merits taking into the account the scale and unique character and appearance of the settlement.

3. Built Form

Proposals which are small in scale and which provide a natural infill or extension to an existing settlement will be considered favourably where they also conform with other relevant LDF policies.

Proposals will be assessed for their impact on the form and character of a settlement. Consideration should be given to the built form of a settlement, its historical evolution and its logical future growth and how the proposal relates to this. Where proposals do not adjoin a settlement then wider consideration must be given to the special physical characteristics of the surrounding area as well as the settlement which sets it apart from its surroundings and contributes to its individuality (e.g. architecture, landscaping, setting, natural features, open space, types and styles of housing, number and size of roads and footpaths) and how the proposal addresses this. Small gaps between buildings should be retained where these provide important glimpses to open countryside beyond and contribute to the character and appearance of the area.

Development which results in ribbon development or has a poor relationship with the built form will not be acceptable. The coalescence of settlements, where two or more settlements are situated in close proximity of each other, should be avoided to protect their individual character and identity. Proposals should not reduce the level of physical separation between them in order to retain the distinct form and character of those settlements.

4. Character and Appearance of the Countryside

Any detrimental impact on the character, appearance and environmental quality of the surrounding area should be avoided and development should not compromise the open and rural character of the countryside. Environmental quality can be assessed by using a set of characteristics that relate to the natural and built environment (e.g. activity, noise, air quality, landscape, water quality, density, design, diversity and distance to accessible services).

5. Infrastructure.

Infrastructure relates to the facilities and resources needed to support communities and can take many forms. Infrastructure is traditionally associated with transport facilities, utilities, sewers, drainage and waste disposal, but also environmental infrastructure which includes open spaces, provision for biodiversity, flooding prevention and social infrastructure (e.g. education, health, culture, leisure).

New development must be capable of being accommodated within existing or proposed infrastructure. This means that there must be no adverse impact upon any of the above unless the development proposes mitigation measures or improvements to the infrastructure as appropriate.

6. Conform with all other relevant LDF policies.

The Guidance Note relates only to development which is within or adjoins the built form of a settlement identified within Annex C of this document. The first paragraph of Core Policy CP4 does not apply to housing proposals where they comply with the criteria of this Guidance Note. For proposals outside of defined settlements, these will be considered 'isolated dwellings in the countryside' and Core Policy CP4 will still apply.

The Guidance Note does not carry as much weight as adopted Local Plan policy, however it will be a material consideration in the planning process. The Guidance Note has been subject to consultation and is fully in accordance with NPPF.

Rural Exception Sites

Sites for 100% affordable housing will, as a result of this Note be acceptable on sites which do not directly adjoin the built form, but where they comply with the other criteria of Core Policy CP9A and other relevant LDF policies.

Settlement Hierarchy 2014

ANNEX 'C'

Service Centres				
Northallerton (with Romanby)	Thirsk (with Sowerby)	Bedale (with Aiskew)	Easingwold	Stokesley
Service Villages				
Brompton East Cowton Morton on Swale	Carlton Miniott Toccliffe	Crakehall Kirkby Fleetham Snape West Tanfield	Brafferton/Helperby Huby Husthwaite Linton on Ouse Stillington	Great Ayton Great Broughton Hutton Rudby
Secondary Villages				
Appleton Wiske East Harlsey Great Smeaton West Rounton	Bagby Borrowby Dalton Knayton Pickhill Sandhutton Sessay South Kilvington South Otterington	Burneston Leeming Leeming Bar Scruton Thornton Watlass Well	Alne Crayke Raskelf Shipton Sutton on the Forest Tollerton	Crathorne Ingleby Arncliffe
Other Settlements				
Ainderby Steeple Danby Wiske Deighton East Rounton Ellerbeck Great Langton Hornby Kepwick (part NYMNP) Low Worsall Nether Silton (part NYMNP) Over Dinsdale Over Silton (part NYMNP) Streetlam Thimbleby (part NYMNP) Thrintoft Welbury Yafforth	Ainderby Quernhow Balk Carlton Husthwaite Catton Cowesby (part NYMNP) Felixkirk Great Thirkleby Holme Howe Hutton Sessay Kilburn (part NYMNP) Kirby Wiske Little Thirkleby Maunby Newby Wiske Sinderby Skipton-on-Swale Sutton under Whitstonecliffe Thirlby (part NYMNP) Thornton-le-Beans Thornton-le-Moor Thornton-le-Street Upsall	Burrill Carthorpe Clifton on Yore Exelby Firby Gatenby Great Fencote Hackforth Kirklington Langthorne Little Fencote Londonderry Nosterfield Sutton Howgrave Theakston Thirn Thornborough	Aldwark Alne Station Brandsby Farlington Flawith Myton-on-Swale Newton-on-Ouse Oulston Skewsby Stearsby Tholthorpe Thormanby Yearsley	Easby Great Busby Kirkby in Cleveland Middleton-on-Leven Newby Picton Potto Rudby Seamer Tame Bridge