



National Planning Policy Guideline

NPPG3 - LAND FOR HOUSING

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Glossary

November 1996

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ISSN 1350-6153

ISBN 0 7480 5673 4



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Introduction

1. This National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG) replaces the version of NPPG 3 published in July 1993.
2. Although the population of Scotland has remained relatively static over the last decade at 5.1 million people, the number of households continues to increase. Recent household projections suggest a similar trend being maintained over the next decade to 2006. However, such projections produced by The Scottish Office are but one consideration in the assessment of how much additional housing land is required. The main change in this NPPG is to give greater weight to the importance of local considerations, balanced with national policy and other matters, when local authorities decide how and where to provide additional land for housing.
3. This National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG) defines the factors which the Secretary of State will have in mind when considering housing policies in development plans, and when considering applications for planning permission which come before him on call-in or appeal. It also indicates the considerations which planning authorities should take into account when preparing development plan policies and when determining planning applications. Developers should have regard to these factors when preparing proposals for housing developments.



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Policy Context

4. In setting out planning policy on land for new housing consideration must be given to other relevant Government policies. Of these housing policy is a key consideration. This recognises that housing is a fundamental need, and the Government, working in partnership with the private sector and other housing agencies, is committed to ensuring that a decent home should be within the reach of all households. Three principles underpin the Government's housing policy in Scotland. These are:-

- to give people a wider choice of housing;
- to improve the supply and quality of that housing; and
- to encourage greater individual responsibility for, and control over, the conditions in which people live.

In pursuing these principles the Government wishes to extend the opportunities for home ownership; to promote diversity and competition in the provision and management of rented housing; and to encourage a range of housing provision which matches household's needs and preferences.

5. With an increasing proportion of the housing stock in Scotland now owner-occupied, the Government aims to build on the changes achieved during the 1980s and work towards an increased level of owner-occupation. It is expected that this will be met in part by further diversification from public sector tenure and in part by new housing development by the private sector.

6. In addition to the central role to be played by the private sector in responding to market demand for a range and choice in housing, Scottish Homes, in conjunction with local authorities, have the task of encouraging the diversification of housing tenure, improving quality and choice of housing as well as ensuring other special housing needs are adequately met.

7. The availability of suitable housing has an important contribution to make towards the achievement of other Government policy objectives. These include the promotion of economic development and job creation. New housing developments can also be the catalyst for regeneration action in urban and rural areas and generally for improving the quality of life and of the environment of particular towns and villages.

8. The requirement for additional housing land must also ensure that established environmental policies are maintained and enhanced. These policies, to which the Government is firmly committed and set out in the Environment White Paper and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, include protection of approved green belts around our cities and towns, the relationship between development and transport, the conservation of natural habitats and species, the protection of the countryside, and the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's urban environment, built heritage and archaeological sites. ***Environment White Paper: This Common Inheritance Cm 1200 1990.***

UK Sustainable Development Strategy Cm 2426 1994

9. Where appropriate this NPPG restates and consolidates previous guidance issued during the 1980's. In the light of the Environment White Paper and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy it gives additional weight to environmental considerations, both in relation to previous and new guidance.

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Policy Guidelines

General Principles

10. The planning system has a key role to play in assisting the achievement of the Government's policies for housing while protecting and enhancing environmental quality. Development plans provide the framework within which the twin goals can be pursued.

11. In assessing the requirement for additional land in development plans housing demand has since the early 1980s been an important consideration. In reaching their views on demand, local authorities have historically been guided by centrally derived information on population and household projections from General Register Office for Scotland GRO(S) and Scottish Office. Likewise they have been expected to have regard to housebuilders' views on demand.

12. It remains Government policy that development plans, and more particularly structure plans, should make provision to meet demand for housing land in full, whenever this is practicable and reasonable. But demand assessments should not be the sole consideration and should not override other important national policies or local factors. Local authorities, either individually or when working jointly on structure plans, should tailor their assessment of housing land requirements to the particular circumstances of their area. Where circumstances so justify, local authorities will wish to consider whether to adjust housing land provision for meeting housing demand, giving greater weight as they see fit to environmental, amenity and infrastructure considerations. They should however be mindful of the role of housing in support of economic development, particularly where jobs are being created, and where regeneration policies are being pursued. In the first instance it is for local authorities to reach a view on the best balance between all the relevant considerations and factors. While the Secretary of State will not normally seek to interfere with authorities' discretion in this assessment, he remains obliged to satisfy himself that the balance struck is reasonable in all the circumstances.

National Considerations

13. Thus, as well as housing demand factors, the future plan requirements for new housing should be guided by both national and local considerations. Of relevance at the national level are -

- centrally derived information on population and household projections, where appropriate supplemented by local authorities' own forecasts, as an input to locally derived demand figures;
- the need to make the best use of existing urban areas, wherever practical, seeking to reuse urban land;
- policies to give greater weight to the possibility of flood risk as well as the relationship of transport and housing;
- emphasis on quality of life in urban areas and the need to maintain and improve the built heritage, seeking where appropriate to retain and reuse historic buildings;
- policies to protect the countryside generally and the character and amenity of existing settlements;
- policies to ensure that approved green belts remain effective;
- policies to assist in regenerating the economy; and
- the need to ensure a balance between the creation of jobs, social and environmental concerns.

14. Demographic calculation of overall housing needs has for many years provided a cornerstone in assessing the requirements for housing land. Household projections prepared and published by The Scottish Office have had a significant role in guiding local authorities' calculations. They will continue to be prepared and published on a consistent basis for all Councils in Scotland, using the (GRO(S)) population projections and trends in household formation. Household projections are not an estimate of the number of additional houses which will be required, but represent just one of the factors to be taken into account

when arriving at figures for housing provision. Household projections assume that past trends in household formation will continue - which they may not. It is for the judgement of each authority, or group of authorities working jointly, to consider the weight to be given to centrally produced projections, and whether other locally derived projections or forecasts may be more relevant to the particular circumstances of their particular structure plan.

15. Many of the other considerations at the national level reflect the Government's commitment to sustainable development. Government policy is to encourage the creation of attractive and convenient urban areas in which people want to live. New housing in urban areas, including the regeneration of run down areas as well as bringing derelict and vacant land and buildings back into use, can assist in making urban areas more attractive places in which to live. At the same time their development reduces pressure on other more sensitive areas e.g. existing settlements readily accessible from the main urban area, green belts and other open spaces, valued by local communities.

16. Housing is the largest development land use in any settlement and can have a significant visual impact. Good design in housing is essential in improving and enhancing the quality of the built environment. But it is not just the design and appearance of the buildings themselves which need to be addressed. In all cases a good quality residential environment in terms of scale, density, and landscaping should be sought. Concern for the surroundings, including the fit in the landscape, and linkages to established development are also important. **In small towns and villages there is a particular need to ensure that their character and landscape setting is not affected unacceptably by the scale or location of new housing developments, and does not lead to over-development.**

17. Balancing such environmental considerations with other social and economic concerns, including the safeguarding of existing and the creation of new jobs, has been a long-standing objective of the planning system. Achieving such a balance is a strategic issue. However, it will best be secured having full regard to local circumstances.

Local Considerations

18. When assessing the requirement for housing land, therefore, local authorities will be guided by a number of considerations relevant to the circumstances of their area. The weight to be accorded to the individual considerations will vary in the light of the circumstances in each local authority or structure plan area. These might include:-

- availability or need for infrastructure including services, road capacity and the availability of public transport;
- availability of social or community needs including schools, shops, places of worship and recreational facilities; or whether existing facilities could be sustained through additional housing;
- implications of land use/transport relationship at the local level and whether the pattern of settlement is likely to be inherently energy efficient;
- scale of housing development and whether it can be integrated with the existing pattern of settlement and contribute to the enhancement of the built environment; or alternatively whether the number of houses cumulatively could undermine the character of particular settlements and affect the environment and amenity adversely and/or lead to a sudden influx of new residents;
- whether there is a loss of green space of importance to the area and valued by the community;
- the maintenance of the landscape character;
- the need to protect views to and from particular conservation areas or historic buildings;
- any views of the local community although these should not override the local authorities' responsibility for determining where the wider community interests and needs lie;
- whether the phasing of development, density controls or other measures can overcome particular local problems; and
- proximity to a hazardous installation.

19. While the overall assessment set out in structure plans should whenever possible provide for housing demand in full, in some circumstances local authorities will need to decide in the light of their interpretation and understanding of the national and local considerations whether assessed demand can be met where it arises. If an authority, or authorities working jointly on a structure plan, conclude that it cannot so be met, the expectation would be that housing demand might be redirected and new housing accommodated

elsewhere in the authority's area (or in the wider structure plan, where relevant) to meet the overall estimated housing demand in the structure plan area. However, in some areas it may be judged that overall less than full demand should be met. In both cases it is important that authorities make explicit and provide the reasoning in the plan as to why such restraint is considered appropriate.

20. Having regard to both national and local considerations, local authorities should ensure that adequate land is available to enable policies and proposals in structure plans and adopted local plans to be carried forward. The introduction of section 18A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 redefined the status to be accorded to development plans in making any determination. This provision adds weight to the relevance of development plans for reaching decisions on all planning applications and appeals. Plans should show how future requirements for new housing can best be met. Structure plans should guide developers to preferred locations and local plans should define the sites for new housing development and set out the policies for securing better standards of quality and design on such sites.

21. Accordingly in adopting a plan led approach, it is important that development plans aim to ensure that 5 years' minimum supply of land, or land capable of becoming effective, is available and realistically capable of development to meet the plan requirement, tailored as appropriate to local circumstances. The supply of land should be largely free or expected to be free, of ownership, physical, marketing, programming and infrastructure constraints in the 5 year period. It should also provide for a variety of sites in terms of both size and location, and should be capable of being developed economically for the wide range of house types, where possible, in areas where potential house buyers want to live.

22. Consultation with representatives of the housebuilders concerning land supply has been a key part of the overall process. This process should be maintained. The views of and consultation with the housebuilders will continue to provide a valuable contribution both to an understanding of demand in the area, and the effectiveness, or likely effectiveness, of land for housing to meet that demand, within the framework of the audit process. The aim should be to seek to reduce disagreement between local authorities and the housebuilders, as far as possible, in respect of what is realistically achievable in terms of the 5 year supply of land for housing development. This dialogue will assist in avoiding or reducing any subsequent debate at public inquiry. Likewise, consultation with Scottish Homes will also be beneficial.

23. Structure plans should also ensure that the requirement for additional housing is set within a longer term framework. PAN 37 indicates that structure plans should be built around a vision of an area extending beyond current programmed developments, ideally at least 10 years beyond the expected date of the approval of the plan. A longer term settlement and housing strategy should indicate not so much the precise scale and location of housing land required, as the overall provision and broad direction of future development. Additional advice is set out in PANs 37 and 38. **PAN 38: Structure Plans: Housing Land Requirements**

Housing Development Within Existing Settlements

24. Experience over the last decade has shown that the reuse of previously developed or underused, vacant and derelict sites, sometimes referred to as "brownfield sites", can make an important and effective contribution to the supply of land for housing. Over one-third of all new housing is now built on redeveloped brownfield sites, with significantly higher percentages being achieved in parts of the Glasgow conurbation. The Scottish Vacant Land Survey indicates that at 1994 at the Scotland wide level there was over 14,000 hectares of derelict and vacant land, some of which could be reused for housing developments. Land long held for industrial or other development purposes may also provide opportunities for housing if it is clear that there is little realistic prospect of redevelopment in accordance with extant but unimplemented permissions, and where a satisfactory residential environment can be achieved.

25. The refurbishment of existing premises, through conversions and improvements, can also offer many useful opportunities. *This Common Inheritance* recognised that in appropriate circumstances the "adaptation and subdivision of existing houses can make a major contribution", particularly in meeting the needs of smaller households. Also, the conversion and rehabilitation of disused or vacant premises not previously used for housing, including former offices, empty and underused floor-space above shops, may offer opportunities for the creation of an acceptable residential environment, whilst retaining the distinctive character of a particular environment.

26. The utilisation of existing premises and the redevelopment of brownfield sites can bring positive benefits by assisting an area's regeneration and enhancing the local environment. In addition there are

often other benefits in terms of better use of existing infrastructure, less need for lengthy journeys to work and services and reduced pressure on greenfield sites. All these factors contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. Therefore, having regard to other development and environmental objectives, planning policies should be based on the following principles:

- **full and effective use should be made of previously developed sites within existing built-up areas, including redevelopment and conversions, to meet as much of the demand for new housing as possible;**
- **priority should be given to re-using derelict and vacant land, or empty housing, in preference to greenfield sites, provided a satisfactory residential environment can be created.**

27. Policies designed to encourage the development or redevelopment of sites in urban areas may not always be enough to bring it about; in some cases developers may need assistance to clear dereliction or contamination, assemble land and undertake environmental works. Where major improvements are required before housing development can be undertaken, proposals should be discussed with the relevant local enterprise company, and if necessary Scottish Enterprise, to establish if they are prepared to assist, for example, with ground consolidation work. In other cases it may be beneficial for planning authorities to work with Scottish Homes and other agencies assembling suitable packages of property and land.

28. Housing improvements and investment particularly in areas of urban regeneration will in some cases be achieved through a balance of mixed development with commercial and community uses being integrated with a range of housing provision. A wider approach to the renewal of such areas including the realignment of street layouts, provision of off-street parking, the availability of community facilities and work places extending or linking into public transport routes, cycle and walkways should in the longer term help to improve their attractiveness as locations for new housing and assist in diversifying tenure.

29. Not all brownfield sites will be capable of producing a good quality residential environment or satisfying the full range of housing needs. Proximity to say, visually unattractive industry may require unacceptable levels of expenditure in order to produce a satisfactory housing environment. Other sites may, on health and safety grounds, be unacceptable for housing. Some brownfield sites may be suitable, for example, in city areas for flatted development for say one or 2 person households but not always suitable for houses with gardens. The reverse may be the case in the peripheral housing estates where opportunities to reuse land may exist to provide houses with gardens, reducing the present dominance of flatted dwellings. These are factors that planning authorities will have to bear in mind in assessing the potential of such sites to contribute to meeting the housing requirements in their area.

Infill Developments

30. The development of infill sites can usefully contribute to the housing supply. It may also help to improve the character of an area, if development proposals are of a sympathetic and appropriate scale.

31. Care should be taken to ensure that the individual and cumulative effects of infill development do not erode the character and amenity of existing residential areas through over-development. Although the majority of housing areas will not have the special or historic character of conservation areas, it does not mean that their quality of residential environment is unimportant. It will often be of great and legitimate concern to local residents. Similar considerations may also be relevant in relation to the redevelopment and conversion of existing premises. Accordingly:

- **the character and amenity of existing residential areas should not be unacceptably damaged by the effects of redevelopment or infill development.**

32. In particular, the demolition of existing premises should not create a presumption that permission for more intensive and high density development will be granted. Inappropriate development cannot be justified to remedy an eyesore caused by demolition and the deliberate creation of waste land.

33. Local plans should indicate where existing densities should not be exceeded or the character of an area altered. Even where the character of an area does not necessarily require the preservation of existing densities, it will be important to retain open space, whether this is in the form of parks, playing fields, informal open spaces, local nature reserves, allotments or private gardens (see paragraph 76).

34. Local plans should therefore contain policies directed specifically to securing a satisfactory environment for infill proposals in existing residential areas. This will involve achieving both an acceptable

residential environment within the new housing development itself and where appropriate ensuring that the form, density and character of the new housing is in harmony with adjacent housing and does not detract from or threaten the environmental quality and the established character of the wider housing area.

35. Similar considerations should also apply in the case of new housing proposed in the gardens or grounds of detached low density older houses and other backland sites in urban, suburban and village areas. Some of these have proved popular because of the environmental quality available in established and mature housing areas. While this type of development can usefully augment the main housing supply where the density, scale and style of housing does not affect the original character of an area, not all existing plots or housing areas will be suitable or appropriate for this type of development.

36. These housing areas are valued for their amenity and environmental quality and these qualities should not be compromised by inadequate space between new and existing buildings, disregard for the privacy of existing housing, substandard vehicular and pedestrian access, or a scale, type and use of materials for new development which has little regard for adjoining properties. Where the development of gardens is allowed, local plan policies should set out clearly the particular areas and circumstances where such development is appropriate, the limits on development and emphasise the need for quality design and good landscaping.

Extensions to Existing Settlements

37. Where brownfield and infill sites are not able to meet the full range of housing requirements, then the release of some greenfield sites adjoining existing towns and built-up areas may be necessary. The scale of new housing development on such sites should not affect the character of existing settlements. More particularly, small towns and villages should be protected from inappropriate large scale development where local authorities consider this would adversely affect the local environment and amenity. Likewise, greenfield sites in green belts should not normally be allowed for housing development. The release of sites in greenbelts should be considered only in exceptional circumstances and where the release can be justified as part of an overall strategic appraisal of housing land requirements in a structure plan and where it does not undermine the continued overall effectiveness of the green belt.

38. Where brownfield sites within existing settlements cannot provide an adequate amount or choice of land for housing, development of greenfield sites should take account of the following considerations:-

- **new housing development should be well integrated with the existing development in terms of scale, density, quality and suitability of site; and should not adversely affect either the local environment or amenity of small towns and villages or approved green belts; or the landscape character of an area.**

39. In greenfield developments, as with other developments, the aim should be a good quality living environment, related sensitively to the pattern and character of the existing settlement. Whilst this will be in part a matter for the judgement of the developer, planning authorities should set out appropriate guidance in their development plans and where appropriate development briefs. Given that the need to ensure maximum economy in the development of agricultural land is no longer as pressing as formerly, it should be possible to secure more attractive and imaginative layouts, with overall lower densities when such land is released for housing development.

40. Meeting housing demand through extensions to existing towns and villages has a number of advantages. Servicing costs are minimised and new housing may assist smaller communities by helping to sustain local services, shops, pubs, schools and other features of community life. The impact on the wider countryside will also generally be minimised.

41. Extensions should complement the character of particular settlements in terms of scale, density and environmental quality. The building type, design and materials should in the main respect the indigenous architectural character of an area and not undermine the local sense of identity and character. The visual impact of new housing development should have regard not only to how it will look within a village or town, but also to its appearance and impact from outwith the settlement, for example from major roads, public transport routes or scenic vantage points. Both the settlement and its surrounding countryside can easily be marred by unsympathetic developments on the edge of the town or village which have little regard to either the architectural character of the area or their fit in the landscape. Additional advice is set out in PAN 44. Therefore expansions particularly in smaller settlements should be carefully planned. They

should also pay regard to the social impact on the community; a gradual build up of development may be preferable to a sudden influx of new residents. Phasing of new housing development may ease some problems although attention should be given to the likely cumulative effect of a succession of developments over an extended period of time. **PAN 44: Fitting New Housing Development into the Landscape**

42. Development plan policies have an important role in identifying how the character and setting of a settlement should be respected, guiding new development to appropriate sites, and in the phasing of such development.

New Settlements

43. Where the capacity of existing settlements to absorb further housing development is limited, new settlements may in particular circumstances have a role to play in meeting demand as part of an overall long term development strategy. In circumstances where the local authority consider that there is a role for new settlements, structure plans should indicate their scale and location.

44. A new settlement could be relevant where:-

- there are notable infrastructure or physical constraints to significant growth in cities, towns and villages;
- there is not the capacity in existing towns and villages to absorb large scale additions without undermining their environmental quality and character;
- it could assist in taking development pressure away from the green belt and existing settlements and villages, and other areas of attractive open countryside;
- there is no risk of the new settlement coalescing with existing settlements, except where an existing village or town provides the nucleus for the new settlement;
- it can be readily serviced by public transport;
- it will not adversely affect natural and built heritage safeguarded by national designations, and any archaeological sites of lesser significance can be accommodated in line with specific guidance in NPPG 5;
- it will not adversely affect a site proposed or designated for its international importance as a RAMSAR site, Special Protection Area, or Special Area of Conservation, unless there is no alternative option and there is a reason of imperative over-riding public interest; and
- it will not lead to other significant environmental disbenefits.

45. New settlements can extend in scale from villages to small towns. New villages will need to be of a size compatible with the cost of providing infrastructure, but depending on location in relation to existing towns and villages, some of the social, community and education services could be shared with nearby settlements. The creation of larger new settlements may require collaboration between private developers and the public sector in the provision of community facilities and new infrastructure. Developers may be expected to provide or fund all or most new infrastructure, road improvements and similar requirements. Development plan policies should be explicit about the provision which developers will be expected to make. A variety of housing and tenure provision types should also normally be provided, including affordable housing where there is a demonstrable need.

46. New settlements provide an opportunity to improve standards of layout, sensitive siting, and innovative design. New settlements also provide an opportunity to achieve energy conservation and efficiency in various ways: by locating the new settlement in close proximity to the main centres of housing demand and employment and where public transport links are or can be made available; by ensuring the layout of the settlement is designed to minimise energy use; and within the buildings themselves. Positive provision should be made for public transport as well as cycling and walking within the settlement.

47. Some small scale new settlements may have a specialist role linked to private sector tourist or leisure related developments. Some of these take the form of small scale new settlements. Such developments can be speculative and may be based on an optimistic view of the market, but they nevertheless offer the prospect of private sector provision of facilities which could otherwise be a burden on the public purse. Leisure and tourist developments can also improve the attractiveness of an area and in turn bring employment benefits. Planning authorities should seek therefore through development plans to guide developers to where linked developments would have an acceptable environmental impact and where

there is likely to be a market for the houses. The leisure or tourist facility should not in itself provide the basis for approving housing development which would not normally be acceptable in planning terms.

Housing in the Countryside

48. Although land within or adjacent to existing settlements can meet most housing requirements, there is also demand for new housing in the countryside. Policy on this matter was previously set out in SDD Circular 24/1985 and the Government is of the view that generally this policy is still appropriate. The Government's policy on new housing in the countryside continues therefore to be based on the following principles:-

- **development should be encouraged on suitable sites in existing settlements;**
- **the coalescence of settlements and ribbon development should be avoided; and**
- **isolated development should be discouraged in the open countryside unless particular circumstances are clearly identified in development plans or there are special needs.**

49. The Government recognises in particular circumstances some relaxation of general policy may be acceptable in support of its wider commitment to Scotland's rural areas and the paragraphs that follow provide guidance on those circumstances where new housing in the countryside could be appropriate. Given the need to protect Scotland's rural environment, the Government sought through *Planning Advice Note 36* to encourage a more sympathetic approach to siting and a more widespread adoption of house design which pays greater regard to variations in landscape and building design in Scotland.

Rural Scotland - People Prosperity and Partnership Dec 95 Cm 3041 HMSO

PAN 36: Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside

50. Particular circumstances in which development plan policies could provide for houses in the countryside either in small groups or individual houses include where they might safeguard or contribute to economic activity and employment opportunities; or where they could assist in maintaining rural communities and local services; or where a dispersed pattern of housing might be appropriate in more remote areas; or where the nature of employment requires residence in a particular location.

51. The Secretary of State has approved structure plans which identify such opportunities, and he will continue to do so provided the justification for a departure from the overall policy is clearly and fully set out in a structure plan. It is, however, important that before planning authorities put forward policies that are supportive of isolated housing development in the countryside, they consider not only the scope for infill development or extensions to existing villages, or the possibility for establishing small groups of houses, but more particularly the potential for conversion and rehabilitation of existing buildings.

52. Traditional buildings including farm buildings which no longer meet their original purpose can be converted and reused to provide homes with modern standards of amenity and fittings. Even where planning authorities operate a policy which seeks to resist isolated new housing development, they should look sympathetically at proposals for the sensitive re-use, conversion or rehabilitation of traditional buildings which are structurally sound and largely intact, can be accessed safely, and readily provided with water, drainage and other services. The addition of limited new housing to converted or rehabilitated buildings may in appropriate circumstances lead to the creation of a cohesive and satisfactory group of new houses in the countryside. But redevelopment should not automatically extend to the replacement of wholly derelict or totally dilapidated buildings, or where the proposed housing is of a different scale, or character to what had existed previously.

53. Where planning authorities conclude that there is justification for isolated or small groups of individual houses, it is important that the public and prospective developers have clear guidance about how, why and where development may take place and any special conditions which are likely to apply. Local plans have often provided for the exceptions in general terms but there is scope for improvement by defining the areas in the countryside where development may be favoured. They should also set out the conditions and criteria including design and quality matters that should apply in these areas.

54. There are also problems arising in rural areas in respect of new housing developments where access from a trunk road is involved. The Government is committed to improving safety on trunk roads and accordingly development requiring direct or indirect access from a trunk road will continue to be strictly controlled in the interests of the safety of trunk road users. Planning authorities should liaise with SODD

Roads Directorate on the preparation of appropriate policies for incorporation in local plans.

55. A number of other lessons can be drawn from the operation of the policy to date. Some of the housing constructed has been insensitive to its surroundings in terms of scale, form and materials as well as inadequate attention being given to its fit in the landscape. While the impact of individual houses may not always be significant, there are cumulative effects on the landscape leading in some cases to the suburbanisation of parts of the countryside.

56. There is a need therefore to improve both the expression and the application of the policy where development plans provide for housing in the countryside. Controls on siting and design are all the more important to ensure that new building is in keeping with the beauty and variety of Scotland's rural environment and natural heritage. Planning authorities and developers should therefore have regard to the following aims in providing for additional housing in the countryside:

- **appropriate siting and design of new housing will often be crucial to integrating development successfully into the countryside; good design cannot always redeem the damage done by inappropriate siting;**
- **new housing should respect the scale and character of traditional housing in the area.**
- **greater attention should be given to the landscape character, the local land form and the pattern of vegetation and the physical suitability of an area to accommodate development; landscaping of sites should be regarded as secondary but where this is necessary there should be greater use of indigenous trees and shrub species characteristic of the area;**
- **conspicuous sites should be avoided especially where important public views are affected; and**
- **consultation with the local community, and their views considered.**

Affordable Housing

57. The Government is committed to facilitating greater choice in housing in terms of location, design, tenure and cost. Responsibility for delivering this choice will rest primarily with private sector developers, responding to market demand. However, there will be cases where the operation of the market would be unlikely to meet some important housing needs.

58. In some urban and rural areas, circumstances may make it exceptionally difficult for local people to find homes that they can afford. In these situations, there may be a need to provide for housing affordable to those in lower income groups (hereafter referred to as affordable housing) which the market would not itself supply. The need for affordable housing may be particularly acute in those rural areas where the population is geographically dispersed, incomes are relatively low and a significant proportion of the housing stock is in poor condition.

59. The Government accepts that, where a community has a demonstrable and particular need for affordable housing, the planning system can legitimately assist with the provision and retention of such housing. Accordingly

- **planning authorities may properly take account of the need for affordable housing when formulating their development plan policies.**

60. Before policies for the provision and retention of affordable housing are included in development plans, the local need for such housing must be clearly established. Local housing authorities have a duty to assess the overall housing needs of their area. Each local authority prepares a housing plan which is the key document in which a local authority in its housing 'enabling' role sets out its assessment of local housing needs and its strategy for dealing with these. In so doing account is taken of housing market trends and the role of Scottish Homes in terms of assessing and meeting housing need, and the private sector. Decisions on the provision of affordable housing should take full account of local housing needs and housing strategies contained in housing plans.

61. Local authorities should consider, in conjunction with Scottish Homes, whether as part of the assessment of local housing needs contained in housing plans, there is a requirement for affordable housing to meet local needs in a particular area. Where appropriate, structure plans may set out policies supported by reasoned justification intended to provide for the supply and maintenance of a stock of housing for persons with a genuine need (as defined in the plan) who require to live in the area. The distribution of need for affordable housing will not be evenly spread throughout an area and this should be

reflected in structure plan policies. In general, policies which address the supply of houses will be more effective than those which seek to restrict and control demand. Where the shortage of affordable housing is a pressing issue, planning authorities might wish to consider the early preparation of a structure plan alteration.

62. As indicated above, the local housing authority in consultation with Scottish Homes has a key role to play in quantifying the need for affordable housing. This information and the structure plan, will be relevant considerations to be taken into account in formulating local plan policies on the subject. Local plan policies should give clear guidance on what the authority, in consultation with Scottish Homes, would regard as affordable housing for local needs, and the mechanism for securing such housing. Furthermore policies should wherever possible provide for affordable housing as part of the general allocation of land in local plans.

63. Where a planning authority's policy is to provide for a proportion of affordable housing, it should be justified in relation to individual settlements or small local areas within settlements. Planning authorities cannot expect local plan policies to be upheld if they seek to impose a common quota or target on developers regardless of market or site conditions, or where they are not based on evidence of need.

64. Local plan policies may also provide for the retention of affordable housing for successive as well as the initial occupants, and set out the arrangements expected to be made to ensure that such housing is reserved for those who need it. The precise mechanisms to be adopted are a matter for the individual planning authority, but possible mechanisms might include appropriate planning conditions, Section 50 and other legal agreements, or encouraging development involving housing associations.

65. Conditions and agreements must however be in support of a legitimate planning objective, and preferably one set out in an approved local plan policy. While such a policy could envisage restrictions on the occupation of property to people falling within particular categories of need as specified in the local plan policy, conditions and Section 50 and other legal agreements should be used selectively and with discrimination. There should not be a blanket use of them. While their inclusion in local plan policies enables them to be viewed as a material consideration when planning authorities are deciding to grant planning permission, the need for an agreement should be determined in the light of the particular circumstances and merits of the individual proposal. Inappropriate conditions may also create uncertainty and delay progress of a scheme. Planning authorities should consider in advance whether their proposals for control over occupation are likely to be practically enforceable in the longer term.

66. Authorities may also wish to explore the possibility of promoting schemes in partnership with private developers where practical arrangements can be put in place to allow for the provision and retention of affordable housing. This might include, for example, provision on land in the authorities' ownership; or in schemes which incorporate grant support with relevant conditions, provided by Scottish Homes.

Housing for Special Needs

67. The planning system can also help to ensure that readily accessible housing is available to the disabled, the frail, the elderly and people with sight and hearing impairments. Where there is clear evidence of special needs, planning authorities may include in local plans policies indicating that they will seek to negotiate elements of physically accessible housing for such groups on suitable sites.

- **The physical requirements of people with special needs, in terms of special housing provision and access to general housing, should be taken into account.**

68. Attention should be paid to the location of housing intended for people with special needs. Not all sites will be suitable for such housing. Certain physical characteristics, such as steep slopes, may be too expensive to address. The proximity of shops and other amenities is also an important factor to be considered. However, plans should not impose detailed standards.

Design and Environmental Quality

69. Regardless of the location, scale and type of new housing developments, it is essential that due attention is given to matters of design and environmental quality, and also to energy conservation.

70. The planning system can help to protect and enhance environmental quality. Attention should be directed to the location, siting, form, type and external design of housing, which can have a significant impact on the quality of the local environment, including adjacent buildings. New housing developments

should aim to improve the overall environmental quality of an area, and where appropriate complement the local and historic character of a settlement. Planning authorities should seek to address these aspects to the extent necessary to protect the environment from inappropriate or detrimental development, and to enhance environmental quality.

71. Developers should aim for a high quality of design and landscaping in all new housing developments with particular emphasis on:-

- the shape, layout and form of the development and its impact on the surrounding area;
- the choice of materials with colours and textures that complement development in the locality;
- aspects of security; (see PAN 46: Planning for Crime Prevention);
- well designed schemes that respect both the local environment and the landscape setting;
- the visual impact of new developments as seen from major road and rail routes;
- within new housing developments, the aim should be to create a sense of place through the spaces created by the buildings and planting and their relationship to existing buildings.

72. Planning authorities can also assist developers:

- **local plans and where appropriate planning briefs should establish realistic objectives and criteria against which new housing proposals can be assessed.**

Relevant matters are likely to include the overall scale and density of the development or alternatively the privacy and amenity requirements for new housing; the height and massing of its various elements; the layout of the scheme and its landscaping; provision of open space; and access - both vehicular and pedestrian - and parking arrangements. Planning authorities should also consider proposals in terms of their relationship to their setting and by reference to the character and quality of the local environment, including any adjacent buildings.

73. At some locations, good design will not be sufficient to offset detrimental effects on the landscape. For this reason, there should be strict controls on housing developments that would have an adverse impact on the setting of an existing settlement. Planning authorities may, in the light of local considerations, need to control aspects of design of new housing developments, where these have an impact on neighbouring development or on the general character of an area. Housing developments should not contribute to the coalescence of settlements or the creation of ribbon development or fragmented development. This is particularly important in relation to green belts and prime quality agricultural land, where there continues to be a presumption against development, but should also be taken into account in other areas.

74. Impact on the landscape is not the only environmental constraint on new housing developments. Of equal importance is the need to:

- protect designated wildlife habitats and other important features of the natural heritage;
- protect the site and setting of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and archaeological resources;
- safeguard prime quality agricultural land; and
- protect designed landscapes and historic gardens against inappropriate development.

Open Space

75. Substantial new housing developments will often merit the creation of areas of open space, particularly where the existing amount of open space is limited or inadequate. Local provision of these facilities will assist in improving community identity and also contribute to the Government's objectives of reducing energy consumption and traffic accidents through reduced travel.

76. Planning policies for new housing development should be consistent with other planning and environmental objectives and seek to protect green belts, and, retain valuable existing open space. Maintaining green belts around our cities and towns is a key objective for protecting the environment. They are important in terms of limiting urban sprawl and providing recreation opportunities and Government policy attaches particular importance to their protection. Parks, playing fields and other open spaces can also provide opportunities for recreation and can be important to the character of an area. In *This Common Inheritance* the Government announced its intention to encourage the creation and retention of suitable open space accessible to residents in urban areas, wherever this is practical. When making provision for housing land, planning policies should also seek to protect open space from

development where it is important for recreation, amenity or nature conservation purposes. Additional guidance is set out in NPPG11. **NPPG 11: Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space**

Energy Conservation

77. The Environment White Paper *This Common Inheritance* and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy identified as one of the Government's key objectives the need:-

- **"to increase the efficiency with which we use energy, at work and in our homes and in our cars and use of public transport."**

Achieving energy efficiency in respect of the location of new developments should therefore be seen increasingly as an integral part of the planning process when providing land for housing. The relationship of new homes to other uses has the potential to influence travel demand in terms of transport type and length of journey. The successful regeneration and redevelopment of brownfield sites in urban areas offers the potential for more journeys to be provided by public transport, helps to limit the growth of housing development on the periphery of our towns and cities and in so doing reduces journey lengths and establishes a pattern of settlement where travel needs can more easily be met by a choice of transport. This trend should be reinforced where it is consistent with policies to improve the quality of life in towns and cities.

78. But as indicated elsewhere the development of greenfield sites will continue to make a contribution to the provision of new houses, and in future greater attention should be given by planning authorities to the selection of locations through development plans which are more efficient in both infrastructure provision and energy consumption. Some recent housing developments have, however, been located and designed with inadequate attention being given to access to public transport, leading to greater reliance on car use. In the light of the wider environmental concerns and the need to provide not only for the immediate requirements but also the longer term requirements of a residential area, new housing areas should be of a scale and the layout designed so as to be easily served by public transport, including rail. The relationship between choice of housing, employment and transport mode is however complex. A joint project has been undertaken by Departments of Environment and Transport to study the relationship with a view to advising on ways of locating development in order to reduce travel distance and to increase transport choice. Guidance will be updated as necessary *Reducing Transport Emissions Through Planning ECOTEC Research HMSO 1993 ISBN 011 7527858*

79. Improving the micro-climate of built-up areas can also be a useful element in the overall approach to energy efficiency. Greater attention by developers to the layout, built form and landscape can create a sheltered micro-climate capable of making outdoor environments more habitable while also reducing the amount of energy needed to maintain acceptable internal conditions in buildings. Additional benefits can also be derived from shelter planting. Development plans therefore provide an important means of integrating energy considerations into the planning process. Further guidance is set out in the research report *Energy Conservation and Planning*.

Energy Conservation and Planning Scottish Office 1996 ISBN 07480 5138 4 Available HMSO Bookshop

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NPPG3 - LAND FOR HOUSING

Action Required: Development Plans

Structure Plans

80. Structure plans are concerned with the demand for new housing land provision from whichever sector creates that demand. They should show how future requirements for new housing can best be met having regard not only to changing demographic and employment patterns, but also to trends in market demand for owner occupied housing and other types of housing met by the private sector.

81. Structure plans should indicate how much housing land provision is required and its general location. The starting point for this assessment should be that full demand should be met, but authorities should take into account other national policies and local infrastructure, environmental and amenity considerations in deciding whether this assessment should be modified. Within a long term settlement and housing strategy local authorities' knowledge of local circumstances and priorities will be important in determining how much housing should be provided and where development should, and should not take place. Equally, national policy on say flood protection, maintaining the permanence of green belts, safeguarding prime quality agricultural land, or sports grounds and open space, or for sustainable development in transport terms may also impose constraints. Where housing demand is modified by national or local considerations, the structure plan should indicate how the balance has been arrived at and how the conflicts are to be managed and resolved. The Secretary of State, in considering plans submitted to him, will need to satisfy himself that the way in which they have carried out the balancing of national policies and local considerations is reasonable, having regard not only to the interests of housebuilding, but also local communities.

82. Planning policies should also take account of any particular needs and demands arising from outwith the private owner occupied sector and contain proposals for meeting private and public demand. The local authorities' housing strategies for renewal and improvement as contained in their Housing Plans will also be relevant considerations.

83. Planning authorities should prepare a longer term strategy for the development and growth of an area. The strategy should extend at least 10 years beyond the expected date of approval of the Plan. Structure plan policies should:

- **provide for a minimum 5 year supply of land which is effective or capable of becoming effective to meet the Plan requirement;**
- **continue to give priority to the re-use of brownfield land for housing;**
- **review land allocations for non-housing uses, particularly for industry, to identify new opportunities for residential development;**
- **identify priority areas for urban regeneration;**
- **identify suitable greenfield locations having regard to both energy conservation and efficiency where specified amounts of new housing can be built either adjacent to existing settlements without affecting their environment and amenity adversely or in new settlements and where public transport is or is to be made available concurrently;**
- **identify any shortfall in the provision of affordable housing;**
- **identify those areas of the countryside where exceptionally new housing - isolated, sporadic or small groups - would be allowed;**
- **prevent the coalescence of settlements and ribbon development;**

- **protect green belts;**
- **minimise loss of prime quality agricultural land; and**
- **protect the natural and built heritage of national importance, including archaeological sites.**

Local Plans

84. The strategic framework and broad policies of the structure plan should be translated into development control policies and site specific land allocations in local plans; where appropriate they should be clearly identified as development opportunities as recommended in *Planning Advice Note 49*. In addition to land allocations, local plan policies should be prepared in relation to the other issues highlighted in this guideline. The local plan should also take account of the relevant Housing Plan and Scottish Homes' policies and priorities. Local authorities should adopt a corporate approach involving housing and planning committees in preparing local plans and area housing strategies. *PAN 49: Local Planning*

85. Improvements in local plan policies also have a contribution to make in guiding developers and in reducing the number of planning permission appeals for residential development. 'Planning by appeal' is always second best and time consuming. It does not necessarily represent the best use of public or private sector resources, and the outcome is uncertain.

86. In the light of the redefined status accorded to development plans in determining planning applications, local plans should address emerging issues and contain clear and robust policies for the promotion and control of development. Great importance should be attached, where appropriate, to the early review or completion of local plans where housing is an issue.

87. Local plans should translate the broad policies of the structure plan into effective site specific allocations and contain detailed policies in relation to other issues highlighted in this Guideline in order to guide proposals for new housing development. Particular attention should be given to energy conservation and efficiency, and environmental quality. In addition local plans policies should:

- **seek to re-use vacant or cleared land in urban areas;**
- **specify the standards and criteria against which the development of gap, garden or other infill sites will be judged;**
- **specify those areas where regeneration and environmental improvement is to be given priority;**
- **provide for a land use framework in those areas where urban regeneration is a priority;**
- **identify the locations and circumstances, where it might be appropriate for the developer to contribute to the necessary infrastructure;**
- **define any areas of the countryside where isolated sporadic or small groups of houses in the countryside will be allowed; set out the criteria against which proposals for individual houses within these areas will be judged;**
- **provide for the conversion and reuse of existing buildings including redundant farm buildings;**
- **clearly define those areas including green belts where new housing will not normally be allowed;**
- **maintain valuable urban open space, particularly playing fields;**
- **identify where affordable housing and special needs housing is needed; how it is to be secured and retained; and set out the categories of need; and**
- **set out the objectives and criteria for guiding the design of new housing proposals, including where appropriate the preparation of planning briefs, particularly in relation to new settlements.**



NPPG3 - LAND FOR HOUSING

Glossary

Brownfield sites: These are normally sites which have previously been developed or used for some purpose which has ceased. They may encompass re-use of existing buildings by conversion; demolition and new build; clearance of vacant or derelict land and new build; infill and various other forms of intensification. It excludes private and public gardens, sports and recreation grounds, woodlands and amenity open spaces.

Demand: The demand for housing is a market phenomenon based on the ability and willingness of individual households to trade in a housing market in order to satisfy their aspirations. It can be satisfied either by existing housing or by new housing requiring housing land provision.

Effective housing supply: This is the part of the established land supply that is expected to be free of constraints in the 5 year period under consideration and will therefore be available for construction of houses.

Established housing supply: This will include the remaining capacity for sites under construction, sites with planning consent; sites in adopted local plans and where appropriate other buildings and land with agreed potential for housing development.

Greenfield sites: These are sites which have never been previously developed or used for an urban use, or are on land that has been brought into active or beneficial use for agriculture or forestry i.e. fully restored derelict land.

Housing market area: This is a geographical area which is relatively self-contained in terms of reflecting people's choice of location for a new home i.e. a large percentage of people settling in the area will have sought a house only in that area.