

Supplementary Guidance: Rural Housing

What is Supplementary Guidance?

Supplementary Guidance (SG) is a material consideration that can be taken into account when determining a planning application. It is intended to provide helpful guidance, consistent with the provisions of the Local Development Plan (LDP). Scottish Government Circular 1/2009 “Development Planning” states, at paragraph 93, that guidance adopted in connection with the LDP will form part of the development plan. As such, upon adoption of this SG, its content will carry the same weight as the LDP in determining planning applications.

This supplementary guidance is intended to supplement the Local Development Plan policy on rural housing by providing additional information on the process of assessing development proposals for rural housing. The guide will form an important part of considering planning applications for housing related development in rural areas. It is intended to be used by the development industry, development management officers and applicants.

Introduction

What is Rural Housing?

Rural housing is housing located outwith the towns and villages identified in the Local Development Plan, in areas generally known as countryside areas. This supplementary guidance is applicable to private and affordable housing.

What is the Purpose of Rural Housing Planning Policies?

New housing in rural areas can be a positive opportunity to increase the provision of housing in rural areas, which can help in sustain local, rural communities, and assist in defining the rural character of South Ayrshire. However, it is important that new houses in the countryside do not damage the rural character and landscape of South Ayrshire or result in suburban intrusion in rural areas. This SG, together with the Local Development Plan, provide a positive framework for allowing new houses in the countryside, by recognising where opportunities exist for new houses, while protecting the character of the area from unacceptable forms of rural housing developments.

LDP Policy: Rural Housing

The starting place for assessing proposals for new houses within the rural areas is the following policy of the LDP: -

LDP Policy: Rural Housing

In countryside areas, including Greenbelt locations, proposals for new housing may be acceptable where they comprise:

- a. The replacement of an existing house, subject to the proposal being sympathetic to the scale and character of the local area.
- b. An extension to an existing house, subject to the proposal being sympathetic to the scale, character and proportions of the original house, which should remain the predominant feature.
- c. The conversion and reuse of a genuinely redundant building of traditional/vernacular character and domestic scale for residential use if the building is substantially intact, structurally sound, or capable of being repaired or restored. The original building must remain a key feature.
- d. A dwelling that is essential for the operation of a rural business. It must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council, through a sound business plan, that the business is economically viable and could not operate without the provision of residential accommodation.

In countryside areas, outwith the Greenbelt, proposals for new housing may be acceptable where they comprise a limited extension to an existing clearly defined and nucleated housing cluster, group of four or more houses, or small settlement, subject to an acceptable impact on the existing form and character of the cluster. The sensitive infilling of gap sites that would consolidate existing dwellings within the group will be particularly encouraged. In all instances, proposals must comply with the further policy guidance set out in the accompanying Supplementary Guidance.

This policy provides the overall approach of the Council to new housing in rural areas, but it leaves out a lot of matters of detail. This Supplementary Guidance now sets out relevant detailed guidance for assessing, considering and determining planning applications for housing related development in rural areas.

Guidance on Assessing Proposals for New Rural Housing

In line with the LDP Policy 'Rural Housing' the following types of rural housing development may be acceptable in rural areas:

1. additions to 'clusters' i.e. where there are existing groups of houses and extensions to small settlements
2. rehabilitation of vacant rural buildings
3. replacement of existing houses
4. houses related to rural businesses
5. house extensions

For each type of rural housing development, this supplementary guidance establishes the principles and design issues that will be considered in determining planning applications. To ensure that rural areas are protected from inappropriately designed housing, prospective applicants must demonstrate that the proposed development is both acceptable in principle, by complying with the following guidance, and that the proposed design solution is in accordance with design guidance set out in this supplementary guidance. Guidance on design matters are set out pages xxx. Guidance for new houses in rural areas is not intended to ensure only traditional design solutions will be acceptable. Contemporary design solutions will also be acceptable, where they can demonstrate the principles of good design set out in the design guidance.

Guidance on additions to clusters (existing groups of houses in the countryside but not within a town or village) and extensions to small settlements

Additions to clusters will be acceptable where: -

- a) the proposal is sympathetic to the character and landscape setting of the existing cluster.
- b) the development represents the sensitive in-filling of any available gap sites consolidating existing dwellings within the cluster.
- c) the development has a clear relationship with the existing cluster by being physically connected with the cluster.
- d) the proposed design solution is in keeping with the character and built form of the existing cluster and otherwise complies with design guidance in the supplementary guidance.
- e) The proposal does not expand the cluster by more than 50% of the number of houses within that group (rounded up to nearest single dwellinghouse) as at date of adoption of this supplementary guidance.

Additions to clusters will not be acceptable where: -

- the cluster is located within the greenbelt.
- the development results in the coalescence of settlements.

- the development extends/creates a ribbon of development.
- the development has an unacceptable impact on the character of the existing building group or its landscape setting and settlement.

NOTE: In applying **LDP Policy: Rural Housing**, and this supplementary guidance, a 'cluster' is defined as a building group consisting of 2 or more houses forming a clearly identifiable 'group', with strong visual cohesion and sense of place.

Additions to small settlements

In recognition that there may be opportunities to add a small number of houses to small settlements in a way that consolidates the form of the settlement at the edge of the settlement, the Council will also allow small-scale housing developments outwith the settlement boundary identified in the Local Development Plan. This can allow a more flexible approach to providing additional housing to meet local needs adjacent to existing settlements, particularly in remote, rural areas. As such the addition of a limited number of houses can be acceptable, even where the site (or part thereof) is not within the settlement boundary shown in the LDP, so long as the proposal is: -

- a) the proposal is sympathetic to the character and landscape setting of the existing settlement.
- b) the development represents the sensitive in-filling of any available gap sites consolidating existing dwellings within the settlement.
- c) the development has a clear relationship with the existing settlement by being physically connected with the settlement.
- d) the proposed design solution is in keeping with the character and built form of the existing building group and otherwise complies with design guidance in the supplementary guidance.
- e) The proposal does not extend/create a ribbon of development.

The above criteria will be applicable to all small settlements within South Ayrshire (except Ayr, Prestwick, Troon, Maybole, Girvan, Coylton and Dundonald), which have no undeveloped allocated Local Development Plan housing site.

Guidance on rehabilitation of vacant rural buildings

In all countryside areas, excluding greenbelt locations, where the original building is a genuinely redundant building of traditional or local character, the Council will support the conversion or replacement of the building to form a new dwelling house, as this will have a positive impact of protecting the historic environment through a high quality design solution, which complies with design criteria, set out in this supplementary guidance; or constitutes a high-quality innovative design, which takes cognisance of the surrounding environment. If the building is listed or within the setting of listed building then Local Development Plan policy: Historic Environment will apply.

Non-traditional buildings may be considered suitable for conversion or replacement where the building is of particular merit.

Within the Greenbelt, the conversion of traditional buildings will be acceptable, provided any alterations and extensions to the exterior of the building, including a repaired or replacement roof, will be limited to those demonstrated as being essential to the creation of a single dwellinghouse from the original building. Alterations to roof pitch, ridge height or wall-head height or the introduction of new roof features – for example, dormers – will not be permitted.

Permitted development rights may be removed in association with the approval of a conversion, particularly within the greenbelt.

Any development proposals should, in the first instance, utilise existing traditional/vernacular buildings as part of the design solution before considering replacement buildings. However, where this is not possible, then re-use of original and traditional materials in any proposed new dwelling house will be encouraged.

Guidance on replacement houses:

Replacement of existing houses will be acceptable where: -

- a) the design of the new house accords with the design guidance for new houses, contained within this supplementary guidance.
- b) the proposed house is sited on the same plot as existing house (i.e. land within the curtilage of the house). If not, justification for alternative site is required. Any new site must achieve a good fit within the landscape. Where possible, the proposed house should be located on the footprint of the existing building.
- c) the existing dwelling is not the result of a temporary or series of temporary permissions and has been in use as a dwelling for at least 10 years.

Note: If the above criteria are met and the proposed design solution accords with the design guidance in this policy, the application can be approved subject to the demolition of the original building should be secured. The demolition of the existing house will be expected to be completed before the construction of a new house.

Guidance on rural business related houses

The Council may give favourable consideration to the provision of on-site residential accommodation for a worker employed in an existing rural business, providing that:

- a) It is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that the business cannot operate without continuous on site attendance and that there are no alternative means of operating the business; and
- b) There is no other existing accommodation that could be used to serve the business; and
- c) No existing dwelling serving or connected to the business or holding has been sold or in some other way separated or alienated from the holding in the previous five years; and
- d) Any proposed buildings or structures form or complement a coherent group of buildings and are not visually intrusive.

Note: the requirement for on-site accommodation may be either as a result of the continuous operation of the existing business, or due to proposed expansion or diversification of that business.

The Council may give favourable consideration to the provision of temporary on-site residential accommodation for a worker employed in a proposed new rural business for a period of two years, providing that it is in full compliance with criteria a-d, inclusive, above, and that a business plan is submitted for the proposed business, which demonstrates the economic viability of the business and associated buildings/property.

In all cases, proposals for new residential accommodation in rural areas, including those demonstrated as being required to operate a rural business, must accord with the Council's design guidance, contained in this supplementary guidance.

Guidance on Business Plans: Business plans will be required to demonstrate that by the third year of operation, the business will employ at least one essential worker per dwelling on a full time basis at a wage of at least 50% of the South Ayrshire average and that the remaining income from the business would support the total equivalent borrowing cost of creating the business, together with its land, property and residential accommodation assets.

Guidance on house extensions

Extensions to dwellinghouses in the countryside will normally be permitted where the proposal:

- a) would not result in the creation of an additional independent dwelling;
- b) is sympathetic to the scale, character and proportions of the original house.
- c) complies with the design guidance in this supplementary guidance.

Loss of Agricultural Land

The construction or conversion of buildings for residential use in rural areas may involve the enclosure of agricultural land for domestic purposes. Large areas of domestic gardens can create an encroachment of suburban features into countryside areas, sterilises agricultural land and may set a precedent for further loss of agricultural land. The enlargement of existing garden ground may also have similar detrimental consequences.

Supplementary Guidance Policy 1: Loss of Agricultural Land

The Council will protect all grades of agricultural land and the countryside setting of properties in the Rural Protection Area and Greenbelt from loss through enclosure for residential or domestic purposes and will seek to ensure that garden ground for new or converted properties is commensurate in size with the dwelling it will serve.

DESIGN OF NEW HOUSES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Planning policies controlling the siting and design of new housing developments in the countryside play an important role in maintaining its character. When considering new housing in the countryside it is important that cognisance is taken of the heritage of an area if the special character of South Ayrshire's countryside is to be preserved and enhanced.

This section sets out guidance on the siting and design of new and converted housing in rural areas. ***This is not prescriptive guidance, intended preclude an innovative design which takes cognisance of the surrounding environment.***

DESIGN POLICY 1: Siting of New Housing

Houses should be designed to fit a site, not the other way around. Design solutions that do not consider the landscape setting of the site will often be ill-suited for the site, detracting from the surrounding landscape. This can represent a lost opportunity to allow the good quality design to be inspired by the site.

New houses in the countryside must comply with the following criteria: -

- a) There will be a presumption against rural housing being located on ridge lines and hill tops, or where the building will disrupt a skyline. Other locations where the building interrupts and conflicts with the flow of the landform will also be resisted.
- b) Existing landscape features such as treebelts, rising ground or natural hollows should be used as a setting to help reduce the prominence of the building(s).
- c) Advantage should be taken of sunlight and aspect; and the landform and landscape features should be used to provide natural shelter from winter exposure.
- d) Changes to the existing topography of a site should be minimised in order that the house fits into the landform naturally, rather than giving the appearance of being engineered into the site.
- e) New housing in close proximity to existing traditional vernacular building(s) should respect and relate to the pattern and design of the existing building(s), and should integrate into the existing layout.
- f) Where the floor area of a proposed dwelling is in excess of 200 square metres, accommodation should be grouped in a courtyard form. Traditional rural domestic scale should be preserved. Generally, houses should not exceed 1½ storeys in height.

DESIGN POLICY 2: Design of New Housing

New housing in the countryside, which seeks to achieve a traditional appearance, should take cognisance of the design guidance in Table 1.

Table 1	
Building Feature	Design Guidance
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roof pitches should be at least 35°. • Flat, mansard, monopitch and asymmetrical roofs should be avoided unless site conditions dictate. In certain locations hipped, half-hipped and piended roofs may be acceptable. • Buildings should use pitched roofs of different ridge heights, to differentiate between the main accommodate and subordinate part of the house. For example, where an integral garage is proposed, the ridge height should be different to that of the house. The pitch should remain the same. • Local types of slate are favoured for roof cladding. Where this is not possible, small-scale synthetic tiles (usually with a percentage of natural state) may be acceptable. Brightly coloured or excessively profiled tiles should be avoided.
Basecourses and Underbuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive underbuilding should be avoided. Floor levels should be stepped to fit into an existing slope. Where a large level platform is essential, it is important to strike a balance between cut and fill, and to ensure that the site is large enough to allow new slopes to be blended naturally with the shape of the surrounding ground. • Basecourse materials should reflect the main finish of the building. Traditionally, wet dash harling or roughcast would be applied to ground level. Terminating the harl at an exposed horizontal base course should be avoided as it gives a visual impression that the building is divorced from the ground on which it stands.
Windows and Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total area of each elevation occupied by window and door openings should be small in relation to the area of solid wall. All windows must have a vertical emphasis, in all but the smallest of sizes. • Where larger windows are required, sub-divisions should be introduced. Mullions can be used to give vertical emphasis to the windows, though they should be evenly spaced at traditional window width intervals. • Margins around all windows will be encouraged at traditional widths. • False astragals or false leaded lights fixed to one or other of the sides of a double glazed unit should be avoided. • Where large windows, such as French doors, are required, privacy and local character should be respected by positioning them to the rear of the house, or by effective screening. The use of French doors rather than patio doors will be encouraged. • External doors should be lined or panelled, and may include fanlights inserted above and in most cases with the same type of surround as the windows.
Eaves and Skews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boxed eaves and overbearing fascia boards should be avoided through careful and neat detailing. • Skews should be used where appropriate. Alternatively, slate eaves should be used instead of barge boards.
Chimneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chimneys should breach the ridgeline of the roof at the gable end, be sturdily proportioned and should be incorporated within the building structure which, together with respecting the traditional vernacular, will achieve greater energy efficiency. 'Feature' chimney stacks designed onto external walls will not normally be accepted.
Dormers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large areas of cladding on the front should be avoided and dormers should be set away from the gables, hips and down from the roof ridge in order that the roofline remains unaltered. The dormer should not project above the ridge of the roof. • Dormers should generally be located to the rear of the building outwith general public view, although in some instances the Council recognises that front

	<p>dormers can contribute to the overall design of the new building.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dormers should be so placed as to form a definite relationship with the main features in the building's facade and should normally line through and be symmetrical with other windows and doors. • Windows forming part of the dormer should reflect the style and proportion of existing windows and, notwithstanding the internal layout desired, the windows should be positioned at the dormer extremities. • Dormers should be clad to reflect the roof finish of the dwellinghouse in terms of materials, colour, texture and size. Timber clad dormers are not normally acceptable especially on more traditional properties. • Dormers should have a traditional appearance normally with a hipped or gabled roof and reflect the character of the building and area.
Rooflights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooflights should, where required, generally be located to the rear of the building and should be of a small scale, have a vertical emphasis and be flush fitted with secret guttering.
Porches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porches should be part of the overall design of the house, with a pitched roof and finished in materials to match the rest of the house.
Garages, Outbuildings and Other Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garages should generally be designed as an integral part of the house, but distinguished by differing ridge heights. Where this is not possible, detached garages should reflect the design and character of the house. Detached garages should be sited to the side or rear of the house. Garage doors should be timber lined or panelled. The use of 'up and over' doors should be avoided. • It is important to consider the location and appearance of outbuildings, liquid gas and oil storage tanks etc. as part of the design process. These ancillary buildings and structures should be used to create a sense of enclosure, define spaces and be built in a style with materials similar to the house. Outbuildings should have a dual pitched roof and central heating tanks must be screened. • Any new vehicular access should be designed to ensure minimal impact.
External Wall Finishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of facing brick and dry dash render should be avoided. The use of natural stone or wet dash harling or roughcast will be encouraged. The latter should usually be painted in an off-white or light grey, or a pigment can be added to the mix to give a very durable colour finish. Only one main type of wall finish should be used. There will be a presumption against development which uses to an excessive degree wall finishes, particularly reconstituted stonework.
Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The space associated with the house should be considered as an integral part of the development, and not as an afterthought. • Landscaping is not to screen or hide the development, but to help integrate it with the surrounding landscape. • Existing trees on site should be retained at a suitable distance from the proposed house to avoid damage to the structure. Where planting is necessary, care should also be taken to avoid damage to foundations and drainage channels. • Suburban ranch type fences, concrete block walls and the regimented use of fast growing conifers should be avoided. The use of stone walling, hawthorn or beech hedging will be encouraged. • A detailed landscaping plan including species, numbers, spacing etc. should be submitted with any detailed planning application.

Glossary of Terms

Clusters: a group of buildings, including occupied houses, which have a clear physical and visual relationship with one another, and which are sited sensitively within the surrounding landscape.

Coalescence: where, as a result of development, two distinct and separate built areas (including settlements or separate parts of settlements) merge together, either visually or physically.

Countryside: land outwith the built up area and a defined town or village boundary, it may be covered by policies relating to Greenbelt, Core Investment Area and Carrick Investment Area – all as shown in Local Development Plan.

Ribbon Development: progression of development in a linear form usually along a road.

Ridge Lines (Landscape): the horizon, which identifies the change from landscape to sky.

Ridge Lines (roofs): on a building with a pitched roof, the ridge is the peak.

Wall Head Height: the highest part of the walls on a building, usually located at the lowest part of the roof pitch.

Structurally Sound and Substantially Intact: a complete building (including its roof) which is proven by a structural report to be free of any serious structural defects in walls, roof or foundations which would require remedial repairs or rebuilding.

Substantially Intact: property which, when converted, will remain visually similar to the original property at the time of the planning application's submission.

Traditional Vernacular: a stone built building built before 1 July 1948 which is of residential scale and form and which has a slate roof.