

SWDP 16: Rural Exception Sites

- A. Affordable housing development will be permitted on small sites beyond, but reasonably adjacent to, the development boundaries⁽⁴⁰⁾ of villages⁽⁴¹⁾ where the following is demonstrated:**
- i. There is a proven and as yet unmet local need, having regard to the latest Worcestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Sub-regional Choice-based Letting Scheme and other local data e.g. Neighbourhood Plan, Parish Survey or Parish Plan;**
 - ii. No other suitable and available sites exist within the development boundary of the settlement; and**
 - iii. Secure arrangements exist to ensure the housing will remain affordable and available to meet the continuing needs of local people.**
- B. Where viability for 100% affordable housing provision cannot be achieved, an element of market housing may be included within a rural exception scheme, to provide sufficient cross-subsidy to facilitate the delivery of affordable homes. In such cases, land owners will be required to provide additional supporting evidence in the form of an open book development appraisal for the proposal containing inputs assessed and verified by a chartered surveyor.**
- C. Further details on the manner in which the policy will be implemented will be set out in an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.**

Reasoned Justification

1. The Framework allows for the provision of affordable housing through rural exception sites. These are additional housing sites that can be used to meet defined affordable housing needs in rural areas where up-to-date survey evidence shows that local need exists. This enables small sites to be used specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities that would not normally be considered because, for example, they fall outside local plan development boundaries. Historically, these sites have relied almost wholly on public subsidy and have been promoted by both Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils, with the support of Registered Providers. However, in response to difficult economic circumstances, a reduction in social housing funding and the Government's emphasis on localism, a number of local planning authorities are developing more pragmatic rural exception planning policies via their Local Plans to help

40 There are some villages without development boundaries which nonetheless may be appropriate for an exception site in accordance with SWDP 2. In such cases the references in the policy to the development boundary should be understood as meaning the main built-up area of the village.

41 Both Tenbury and Upton-upon-Severn are classified as 'other towns' under SWDP2 but have populations of less than 3,000. It is asserted that both towns are severely constrained by flooding and therefore it may be appropriate to consider proposals for exception sites outside the current settlement boundaries if suitable sites for affordable housing provision cannot be identified within the town.

deliver affordable housing. This includes cross-subsidisation through allowing an element of market housing on exception sites to subsidise the affordable housing provision. This approach is supported by the Framework where it would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.

2. The Homes and Communities Agency's grant funding has been reduced significantly since 2011. The introduction of Affordable Rent may offer providers the opportunity to utilise the flexibility to charge up to 80% of market rents to maximise financial capacity. This could help to improve the viability of Rural Exception Sites.
3. There may be scope for an element of cross-subsidy from market housing on sites where it can be demonstrated, through a viability assessment, that the provision of 100% affordable housing would not be viable by itself.
4. It should be emphasised that exception sites must meet local needs; in this context, "local need" for the purposes of part A.i. means the parish and adjoining parishes. In terms of occupation of the properties, "local connections" will be defined in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.