



Change is inevitable: it should be for the better

## POSITION STATEMENT 7 PLANNING FOR HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

*This statement sets out a set of principles which CPRE will use to inform its advice to local planning authorities on the content of Local Plans*

### Summary

*We advocate adoption of the following spatial principles:*

- *Containment – consideration of housing and employment together and minimising the need for travel*
- *Giving priority to the development of brownfield sites, including ambitious targets in local plans*
- *Focussing growth around Gloucester and Cheltenham where most employment opportunities are likely to arise, while broadly retaining the present extent of the Green Belt*
- *Recognising the purposes of AONB designation and the priority attached to conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and the cultural heritage.*

*We advocate adoption of the following principles in implementation:*

- *Increased provision of affordable housing in rural communities, with local plans addressing separately the need for market housing and affordable housing*
- *All significant housing developments should offer a mix of dwelling sizes and an element of affordable housing and land should be used efficiently*
- *New development should respect local character and distinctiveness*
- *Development should be to the highest standards of energy efficiency*
- *New development should be fully integrated with existing settlements*
- *Timely provision of local services*
- *Generous provision of Green Infrastructure should be an integral part of major development*
- *Conversion to residential use of redundant buildings outside settlement boundaries in unsustainable locations should be normally be resisted.*

### Background

National guidance on these topics is found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular Section 5 Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes, and Section 6 Building a Strong

Competitive Economy. Great emphasis is placed in the former on the number of new homes, at the expense (in CPRE's view) of other relevant considerations.

Section 6 is very brief. Paragraph 80 begins by stating that "*planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt*". Paragraphs 83 and 84 refer specifically to the rural economy, encouraging the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas.

## **Spatial principles**

### *Containment*

Housing and employment should be considered together, ensuring that housing provision is in step with employment growth, so reducing the need for longer distance commuting as far as possible. In rural areas, where there is imbalance, development of small scale employment opportunities should be encouraged and free market residential development strictly limited.

### *Priority to development of urban brownfield sites*

The priority should be to develop brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites, so aiding urban regeneration and limiting loss of countryside unnecessarily, whilst recognising that some urban brownfield sites are important for biodiversity.

District councils should include appropriate brownfield development targets in their local plans. Such targets should be ambitious to help avoid the release of greenfield development sites when brownfield development opportunities are still available.

To avoid loss of local character and distinctiveness, care is needed to avoid inappropriate development of gardens, excessive infilling in villages, and in the redevelopment of suburban areas at higher densities.

### *Focussing growth around Gloucester and Cheltenham*

Most new employment opportunities are likely to arise in and around the major urban centres of Gloucester and Cheltenham. Accordingly, growth should be focussed on these areas with growth in the smaller market and other towns such as Stroud and Tewkesbury limited to that necessary to serve their hinterlands, and growth in villages and hamlets limited to local needs only, ie the needs of the current residents. In all cases, the principle of containment should apply.

### *Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt*

The Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt was designated in 1958. It is the second smallest Green Belt in England, confined to land separating Gloucester and Cheltenham, and Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve. The extent of the current Green Belt should be broadly retained and consideration given to extension to the north of Bishop's Cleeve to provide further containment to the Cheltenham urban area, and to the south of Gloucester to

safeguard the strategic gap between Gloucester and Stonehouse. Any proposal to modify the general extent of Green Belt land to accommodate urban extensions or other development would still need to be justified by exceptional circumstances as national guidance requires. More detail is found in our Position Statement 10 Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt.

#### *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)*

Development plans and planning decisions should recognise the purposes of designation and the priority attached to conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and the cultural heritage. AONB Management Plans should be adopted by local authorities as Supplementary Planning Documents.

Development plans should **also** recognise the importance of the setting of AONBs. Development should not be permitted if it would adversely affect the AONB and conflict with the purposes of designation.

### **Implementation**

#### *Affordable housing*

There should be increased provision of affordable housing in rural areas based on up-to-date assessments of housing need. However, the need for affordable housing should not justify provision of “excess” market housing in order to achieve sufficient affordable housing through planning obligations. In this context, lower thresholds should be sought in villages and small towns where there is a requirement to provide an affordable housing component in residential development.

Local plans should separately address the need for market housing and affordable housing and the housing numbers required for each.

More detail is found in our Position Statement 5 Affordable Housing.

#### *Housing mix*

All significant housing developments should offer a mix of dwelling sizes and an element of affordable housing, in recognition of the increasing number of single person households and the needs of families.

#### *Housing density and design*

Land should be used efficiently. Higher housing densities should be aimed for, consistent with good design. With careful attention to design and layout, good quality development can be created at higher density whilst still providing attractive private and communal open space.

#### *Local character and distinctiveness*

New development in villages and small towns should respect local character and distinctiveness and settlement pattern. In terms of design, this does not mean simply aping the past: there is a place for innovative design which can still be “in keeping.”

#### *Sustainable construction*

Development should be constructed to the highest standards of energy efficiency. Renewable energy installations should be encouraged so long as these are visually acceptable. In all significant developments, local authorities should require a proportion of energy supply to be provided from on-site renewable energy sources.

#### *Integration with existing settlements*

Where new development adjoins existing settlements and built-up areas it should be planned so that it is fully integrated with the existing development and functions as such through appropriate road and pedestrian links.

#### *Provision of local services*

For major housing developments there should be a requirement that essential local services and infrastructure required by the new community is provided early in the construction phase. Such ‘services’ would include children’s play areas and sports facilities, a local convenience store and a public transport link. For large developments a new primary school and health facilities are likely to be needed. Incremental and cumulative smaller developments which thereby avoid proper provision of local services should be resisted.

#### *Green Infrastructure*

Generous provision of green infrastructure should be an integral part of development, largely funded by developer contributions. Investment should be focussed on opportunities for green infrastructure in the Green Belt contributing to networks of open space, better access into the countryside and provision and enhancement of landscape features and wildlife habitats. More detail is found in our Position Statement 10 Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt.

#### *Redundant buildings in the countryside*

Conversion of redundant buildings in the countryside to residential use is not generally supported where development would be outside settlement boundaries in unsustainable locations. A small-scale business use would be preferable, particularly if associated with land management. However, where a building is of architectural or historical significance and conversion to employment or social use proves not feasible, sympathetic residential conversion would be preferable to abandonment.

**Reviewed and updated May 2021**

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**CPRE Gloucestershire Position Statements are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. They should be read as a set.**

