



The countryside charity
Gloucestershire

Change is inevitable: it should be for the better

POSITION STATEMENT PLANNING FOR HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

This statement sets out a set of principles which CPRE will use to inform its advice on 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*
- *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.*

Spatial principles

Containment

Provision for 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.

While the national brownfield development target has been dropped, 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 whilst 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 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, being 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 need to be justified by *exceptional circumstances*. This policy is elaborated in our policy statement *Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt*.

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 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 communities in rural areas. However, the need for affordable housing should not justify provision of “excess” market housing in order to achieve sufficient affordable house 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. Land should be released specifically to meet each of these needs.

Our policy on affordable housing is elaborated in our separate policy statement *Affordable Housing*.

Housing mix

Recognising the increasing number of single person households, the needs of families and the need for increased provision of affordable housing, all significant housing developments should offer a mix of dwelling sizes and an element of affordable housing.

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 designs 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.

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. This policy is elaborated in our separate policy statement *Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt*.

Re-use of redundant buildings in the countryside

Conversion 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.

Updated August 2012

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