

Issue 2: The Distribution of Development (settlement hierarchy) and the Green Belt

Inspectors Question 2.7: Should limited infilling in the selected small villages in the Green Belt be restricted to only affordable housing for local people. Paragraph 54 of the NPPF suggests that consideration be given to allowing some market housing to facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing. Should this approach be more clearly reflected in the Core Strategy?

1. The Inspector's question is clearly aimed at draft Policy CS6 and in particular part (b) which suggests that in Chipperfield, Flamstead, Potten End and Wigginton, which are all selected small villages in the Green Belt, limited infilling and affordable housing for local people will be permitted. The Inspector's interpretation of this part of Policy CS6 is that this is the 'only' development possible within the small villages identified.
2. If the Inspector's interpretation of the policy is correct, then we are concerned that the approach set out in CS6 would not be consistent with paragraph 54 of the NPPF. It is recognised that the Pre-Submission Core Strategy was published prior to the NPPF being issued and therefore any inconsistencies are perhaps understandable. However, national planning guidance has clearly changed and seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas and to locate housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities (paragraph 55 of the NPPF).
3. Therefore, there is a clear planning requirement to be sound for Policy CS6 to be amended so that it better reflects the NPPF in acknowledging that market housing can assist rural communities through the provision of new affordable homes rather than to solely limit any new development to affordable housing only for local needs.
4. The Inspector will be aware that Policy 6 of the Adopted Dacorum Local Plan has been the Borough Council's policy position in selected villages for several years in seeking to limit new development to up to 2 dwellings and solely for local needs.

The implementation of this policy has been problematic and as a Practice we have been involved in several proposals where Policy 6 applies and where the interpretation of the policy has differed between different development proposals.

5. Draft Policy CS6 provides an opportunity to clarify and improve the planning approach to new development in selected small villages in the Green Belt and through the up to date guidance provided by NPPF to recognise that the previous restrictive policy has contributed little to the vitality of rural communities.
6. The NPPF is clearly seeking to improve the sustainability of rural communities by allowing new market housing and affordable housing. This approach would be entirely consistent with the Core Strategy's Strategic Objectives 1 (promote healthy and sustainable communities), 9 (to support rural enterprise and 10 (to provide a mix of new homes to meet the needs of the population).
7. The remaining parts of draft Policy CS6 permits other forms of new development within selected villages and for that reason in our view do not require amendment.
8. We note that the Inspector, under Issue 6: Providing Homes has raised question 6.9: How will the villages in rural areas be met? and we consider that the changes proposed below to Policy CS6 responds positively to the provision of new housing in at least the selected villages and will ensure that the Core Strategy is sound having been **positively prepared** and **consistent with national policy**.

Proposed Amendment to Policy CS6: Selected Small Villages in the Green Belt

9. Delete part (b) and replace with:

(b) Small scale market housing development to facilitate the provision of affordable homes.