

## **RURAL PLACES**

Draft NPF4 supports vibrant and sustainable rural places, and sets out how the planning system should encourage development that helps to support, sustain and grow rural areas while safeguarding and growing natural assets that underpin businesses and jobs. Rural economic agility, innovation and diversification should be encouraged while seeking to ensure that the distinctive character of our rural areas, the service function of small towns and their cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced.

### **Local Development Plans should:**

- set out proposals to support the sustainability and prosperity of rural communities.

### **Development proposals:**

- that support the resettlement of previously inhabited areas should be supported where consistent with climate change mitigation targets;
- in rural areas should be supported where they will:
  - reflect the development pressures, environmental assets, and economic needs of the area;
  - address issues of need and are suitably scaled, sited and designed;
  - reuse a redundant or under-used building;
  - provide an appropriate use of a historic asset or enables the protection of a historic asset;
  - re-use vacant and derelict or brownfield land, where a return to a natural state is unlikely;
  - provide affordable housing on a small site where there is significant unmet local need; or
  - contribute to the sustainability of settlements & 20 minute neighbourhoods.
- that contribute to the viability, sustainability and diversity of the local economy should be supported;
- for new homes outwith existing rural settlements, other than in accessible or pressured areas, should be supported where:
  - they are necessary to support the sustainable management of a viable rural business or croft and there is an essential need for a worker to live at or near the business;
  - it is a single home for the retirement succession of a viable farm;
  - it would involve the subdivision of an existing dwelling;
  - it would provide an appropriate use of a historic asset or enables the protection of a historic asset;
  - it would re-use redundant or disused buildings or reinstate a former dwelling; or

- it would re-use vacant and derelict or brownfield land, where a return to a natural state is unlikely.
- in accessible or pressured rural areas should only be supported where they are consistent with the spatial strategy set out in the Local Development Plan and do not result in unsustainable suburbanisation of the countryside;
- in remote rural areas should be supported where they are sustainable and encourage employment, support fragile and dispersed communities or include provision for small scale development, taking account of environmental protection policies and addressing issues of location, access, siting, design and environmental impact;
- on prime agricultural land, or land of lesser quality which is culturally or locally important should not be supported unless the layout and design minimises the amount of good quality land required and the development is essential for:
  - meeting an established need where no other suitable site is available;
  - production/ processing facilities associated with the land use where no other local site is suitable
  - small scale development directly linked to an existing rural business;
  - the development of production and processing facilities, associated with the land produce, where no other local site is suitable;
  - the generation of renewable energy or the extraction of minerals where there is secured provision for restoration.

## **Responses to the Position Statement**

There was support for strengthening the approach to protecting and restoring the natural environment and for the change of policy approach to promote working and living in rural and island areas. There were concerns expressed that the focus on rural repopulation should not risk the quality of the countryside environment by permitting unsustainable development in rural areas.

## **Policy changes**

The draft policies in NPF4 build on the vision set out in NPF3 for vibrant rural, coastal and island areas, with growing sustainable communities. The draft NPF4 policies are informed by research commissioned on Rural Planning Policy to 2050, which explored, from a land use planning perspective, the current challenges and the future opportunities for land use diversification in rural Scotland.