



BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UP TO 2021

Adopted January 2012

ADEILADAU YNG NGHEFN GWLAD CYNLLUN DATBLYGU LLEOL HYD AT 2021

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1. PURPOSE OF THE SPG

- 1.1** This document is part of a package of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) produced to support, and add detail to, the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan Up To 2021 (LDP). This SPG is intended to provide clear guidance on the interpretation and implementation of LDP planning policies on:
- Rural development and diversification (Policy CW19);
 - Conversion, Extension and Replacement of Buildings in the Countryside (Policy CW20);
 - New buildings associated with agriculture or forestry (Policy CW15).
- 1.2** Once adopted by the Council, this document will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and listed building consent applications.
- 1.3** It is not the purpose of this SPG to repeat guidance on those issues in relation to development in the countryside that are covered sufficiently within national planning guidance. For guidance on the following areas, applicants are advised to refer to the relevant sections of *Planning Policy Wales (PPW, Edition 4 - February 2011)* as amended and *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)*:
- Infilling or minor extensions to rural settlements (PPW 4.6.8, 9.2.22)
 - Developments in green wedges (PPW 4.7)
 - Rural enterprise dwellings (PPW 9.3.6-9.3.10, TAN 6 4.3 - 4.14)
 - One Planet Developments (PPW 9.3.11, TAN 6 4.15)
- 1.4** This SPG is also not intended to provide guidance on other types of development that may be acceptable outside of settlement boundaries such as Affordable Housing Exceptions Sites (Policy CW12), Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites (Policy CW21) and some recreation and leisure proposals (Policy CW15).

2. DEFINING 'BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE' AND 'RURAL DEVELOPMENT'

- 2.2 For the purposes of interpreting policies CW19 and CW20, the terms 'buildings in the countryside' and 'rural development' relate to proposals in areas that are located outside of a defined settlement boundary, as identified by Policy SP5 of the LDP.
- 2.2 Rural development in the context of this policy will include new development (new buildings or change of use) that is associated with rural businesses. This may involve the expansion of existing businesses within the countryside where this will be acceptable in amenity terms, or the setting up of new businesses, including tourism enterprises, where this would be acceptable in a rural location.

3. USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

- 3.1** The key ethos of national planning guidance is that new building in the countryside should be strictly controlled. However, the conversion and/or extension of existing buildings in the countryside, or the replacement of buildings, will be permitted where a proposal accords with the requirements of the LDP policy and follows the key principles set out within this guidance.
- 3.2** Where there are proposals to re-use or replace buildings in the countryside, the after-use of these buildings is a fundamental consideration. In line with PPW, if a proposal is for the conversion or extension to a building that is currently used or was last used for business purposes (commercial, industrial or agricultural), the future use of the building should also be for business purposes.
- 3.3** The residential conversion of traditional rural buildings that have ceased to be used for a business use will only be acceptable where the applicant can demonstrate that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a business use. To demonstrate this, the applicant will need to submit a statement as part of the planning application that identifies that appropriate marketing of the property for a business use has been carried out at a realistic price as verified by an independent valuer. Advertising should include:
- Marketing with a commercial property agent that operates within Caerphilly County Borough for a minimum period of 6 months;
 - At least two adverts in a regional newspaper that is circulated in the area.
- 3.4** If a replacement building is proposed, the use of the building should be the same as the building it is replacing. A new dwelling will only be permitted where it is replacing an existing dwelling, not if it is replacing an agricultural building or building used for business purposes. Where a building is currently in business use, it should only be replaced by another business use, although the nature of any replacement should be considered to ensure that there is no adverse effect on amenity.

4. STRUCTURAL SOUNDNESS – CONVERSION AND REPLACEMENT

- 4.1** Proposals for the conversion of buildings will only be permitted where the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion or rehabilitation without major alteration or reconstruction. In order to determine that the building is structurally sound, a structural survey should be undertaken by a structural engineer or suitably qualified professional to determine whether the building is capable of accommodating the proposed conversion scheme. The survey should identify any areas of the building that may require structural alterations and should include a method statement identifying how the work will be carried out.
- 4.2** ‘Major alteration or reconstruction’ is defined as the need to demolish and rebuild more than 10% of the existing wall area or where there is a need to construct a wall where one is not currently in place.
- 4.3** The conversion of a building that does not have an existing skeletal roof structure (joists and beams) in place will be considered as major reconstruction and will not therefore be acceptable. However, the replacement of a roof would not be considered to be a ‘major alteration’ for the purposes of this guidance provided the main frame including joists and beams are to remain. Any replacement roof would need to be of a design and construction appropriate to the host structure, as discussed in Section 7.4.
- 4.4** The local authority will include conditions as part of any planning permission stating that the planning permission only relates to the refurbishment and rebuilding works detailed in the approved plans and the Method Statement and does not extend to the rebuilding of the buildings in the event of collapse. Where any additional problems are identified as conversion work begins, an additional method statement must be submitted for approval in writing from the local planning authority.
- 4.5** If a building has been found to be structurally unsound and not capable of conversion, a replacement building may be permitted provided it is for the same use as the building it is replacing. When considering whether a replacement building would be acceptable, it will be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the existing use of the building is not redundant and the building has not been abandoned. The physical condition of the property, the period of non-use, whether there have been any other uses and evidence regarding the owner’s intention will be considerations in determining whether a building has been abandoned.

5. BUILDINGS NOT SUITABLE FOR CONVERSION

- 5.1** Not all buildings are necessarily suitable for conversion and the following points should be considered when determining whether to convert a building in the countryside. This list is not exhaustive.
- Conversions of buildings that are makeshift or temporary in nature such as caravans will not be permitted.
 - Only buildings that are of sufficient size to accommodate an alternative use will be acceptable. For residential conversions, buildings should have a minimum footprint of 40m² and should not require an extension to make them of sufficient size for their proposed use.
 - The conversion of buildings in remote or isolated locations will not be acceptable.
 - Modern buildings (post-1947) are not considered suitable for residential conversion.
 - The residential conversion of a building that was previously granted planning permission as a replacement building for another use will not be acceptable, as planning permission would only have been granted on the basis that the replacement building was for the same use as the building it was replacing.

6. NEW BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 6.1** New buildings in the countryside may only be permitted where they are proposed as part of rural development and diversification schemes and, by the nature of the business proposed and/or the availability of buildings, it would not be possible for the business to be accommodated within existing buildings.
- 6.2** Any new buildings and ancillary developments associated with them will only be permitted where they relate to acceptable rural land uses and will have to adhere to the key principles set out in Section 7.
- 6.3** Suitable rural development will not include residential development unless the construction of a new house is a replacement of an existing dwelling in accordance with Policy CW20, or can be justified as a rural enterprise dwelling in line with the requirements of TAN 6, where accommodation is required to enable rural enterprise workers to live at, or close to, their place of work.

7. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING NEW BUILDINGS AND THE CONVERSION, EXTENSION AND REPLACEMENT OF BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

There are some key principles that apply to all proposals for the development of buildings in the countryside, from the conversion of existing buildings to the erection of new buildings for rural businesses.

7.1 Setting

7.1.1 It is important that rural developments do not result in the domestication or urbanisation of the countryside setting. In order to ensure that this does not occur, the following should be considered:

- Where an existing building has a clearly defined curtilage boundary (the area immediately surrounding a building and directly related to it), the curtilage used for future development should normally reflect the original boundary line, unless an extension to the curtilage is necessary to accommodate an acceptable rural business use. Additional areas of undeveloped countryside including adjacent paddocks should not be included within the curtilage of buildings in residential use.
- Where the existing building does not have a readily defined curtilage, the amount of land included as part of a curtilage should be kept to a minimum.
- Boundary treatments should be appropriate for the context of the area and should ensure that the area remains open in character where this was traditionally the case. Where boundary treatments such as gates, walls or hedges already form part of the traditional character of the countryside location, these should be incorporated into any scheme. Opportunities for the repair of boundary structures where necessary will be favoured over their replacement.
- Suitable new boundary treatments are likely to include native species hedges, dry stone walls and post and wire fencing. Boundary treatments more common to an urban area such as close board fencing, brick walls or concrete will not be appropriate for a residential use.

- It is recognised that some rural businesses may require security fencing due to the nature of the business, but this should be of a type that has a minimal visual impact. Palisade fencing or concrete post and panel fencing should be avoided. Natural screening measures should be used to mitigated against the visual impact of security fencing.
- Where a building in the countryside is in residential use, the development of ancillary structures such as garden sheds, summerhouses, outbuildings or greenhouses may result in the domestication or urbanisation of the setting and will therefore be strictly controlled. The Council will remove permitted development rights (*the right to carry out limited forms of development without the need for planning permission*) through planning conditions where appropriate as a means of ensuring that the setting is not adversely affected by uncontrolled development in the countryside. Only those structures that are ancillary to the residential use and can be accommodated without harm to the setting of the area will be permitted. Ancillary structures will not normally be acceptable on common land.
- If a proposal is for rural diversification and is likely to generate a number of visitors to the site (tourism related schemes, farm shops etc), consideration should be given to the availability of public transport and the suitability of the highways network to accommodate additional traffic.
- The type of use proposed should be suitable in amenity terms and should not adversely affect the character of the area by virtue of an unacceptable impact on visual amenity or an increase in pollution (for example noise, smell, light or traffic).
- A number of buildings in the countryside within the County Borough are listed. Any work that affects the character of a listed building requires listed building consent. The owner or developer of a building is advised to contact the Council's Conservation and Design Officer (contact details can be found in Section 9) for further information on whether listed building consent is required.

7.2 Location of Buildings

- The replacement building should be within the curtilage of the existing building. It should normally be located on the footprint of the previous building, unless highways safety or flood risk benefits can be gained from its relocation elsewhere within the curtilage.
- Only one main replacement building should be constructed for each original main building it is replacing. It will not be appropriate for a single dwelling to be replaced by two or more dwellings.
- The location of any new buildings for rural enterprises should be well related to existing buildings. It will not normally be acceptable for isolated new structures to be developed away from other buildings, as this is likely to be visually intrusive.



Converted buildings should be well related to original building



Isolated buildings and modern buildings requiring significant reconstruction will not be suitable for conversion

7.3 Scale

- Where an extension to a building is proposed it should ensure that the original building remains the dominant element. Extensions should not normally result in an increase in the volume of the original building excluding any previous extensions by over 50%, although the increase in size that will be acceptable will depend upon the character of the existing building. If a building has already been extended, the impact of further extensions on the character and context of the area will be considered.
- Extensions to buildings that have been converted for residential use will not normally be allowed. Residential development is not normally acceptable in the countryside, and it is only allowed to preserve a building that contributes to the character of the countryside. However, it is recognised that some buildings may have been extended prior to their conversion using unsympathetic stone, blockwork or corrugated sheeting structures, and provided the main structure remains dominant, and its character is not harmed, the sympathetic replacement of those accretions during the original conversion will be considered.
- Extensions should normally be at the side or rear of a property, but should not extend the curtilage of the building.



The extension to the building should be at the side or rear and should be subservient to the original building

- If the proposal is for a replacement building it may be acceptable for the replacement to be larger in size than the original buildings where this is appropriate for the local context and would not have an adverse impact on the local landscape. However, any increase in volume should not be greater than 50% of the volume of the original building, excluding any extensions.

- Replacement buildings should reflect the type of building that is being replaced. If the original building was single storey (such as a bungalow), it would not be appropriate for this to be replaced with a building of two storeys or more unless this increase in height would accord with other buildings on the site and would have no harmful visual impact.
- If new buildings are allowed as part of rural development and diversification schemes, the number and size of buildings proposed to be used for the new or expanded business should be proportionate to the number of existing buildings on a site. Consideration will be given to recent developments that have occurred on the site and the potential impact that further development may have on the setting of the area.

7.4 Materials and Design

7.4.1 Many existing buildings in the countryside have characteristics that are worthy of protection and it is important that conversions, extensions and replacements respect the local context, both in terms of materials and design.

7.4.2 The key approach for any proposal involving the re-use of buildings is that there should be the **least amount of change possible to the external appearance**. Where possible in conversion schemes, internal features of interest should also be retained.

Roofs

- Original roofs should be retained and repaired with original materials wherever possible, unless an alternative roofing material would be better suited to the character of the building and its local context.
- Extensions should use the same roofing materials as the original building.
- If replacement or new roofs are necessary they should utilise materials best suited to the character of the area, rather than using modern alternatives where this would not be appropriate to their setting. Traditional roofing materials in the County Borough include stone, natural grey slate and rosemary clay tiles.

- For conversions, any alteration to the roof height or pitch should be avoided where this would adversely affect the skyline or the character of the building itself.
- Conversion schemes should not include dormer windows where these do not form part of the original building. If it is necessary for windows to be introduced in the roof, they should be limited in number and should be in the form of roof lights, preferably on the rear of the building and/or on the least visible elevation.
- There are a small number of thatched properties within the County Borough. If re-thatching is necessary, local techniques and materials should be used.



Original roofing materials incorporated into this conversion scheme



Use of different materials for the roofing and walls of extension



Walls

- Extensions should be constructed from the same materials as the original.
- Where lime mortar has originally been used as part of the building construction any re-pointing or repair should use this material rather than cement.
- The re-use of salvaged material for extensions and replacements is encouraged where possible.
- Where historic coverings such as limewash, lime render or weatherboarding form part of a building, these should be retained and included on any extensions.
- If new buildings are proposed, they should be constructed from materials that reflect other buildings on the site and in the locality.



Extensions should use the same material as the original



The same wall coverings should be used throughout the building



Windows and Doors

- If new windows or doors are necessary as part of a scheme to convert or extend a traditional building these should be kept to a minimum and should be vertical or square in appearance.
- The siting and size of new windows and doors should reflect the existing patterns of fenestration in the building to be converted or extended and/or other buildings within the existing group. New or replacement windows and doors should match the original design and materials where appropriate.
- In conversion schemes original openings should be retained and opportunities to re-open windows or doors that have been blocked up should be explored.
- If it is necessary to close an original opening, it will be appropriate to use a recessed panel to indicate where the original opening was located.



Original openings should be retained and additional openings kept to a minimum



The insertion of additional windows should be kept to a minimum and reflect existing patterns of fenestration

Heating and Ventilation

- It is recognised that there will be a requirement for heating and ventilation measures to be incorporated as part of certain schemes.
- The design of any necessary heating or ventilation systems should respect the character of the existing building.
- Chimneystacks should only be included where there is an original internal chimneystack within the building.
- Any heating system flues and extractors should be designed to ensure that they have a minimal visual impact.
- Where vent tiles are used they should respect existing roof and wall tiles.
- Oil/gas tanks may be necessary to serve some properties in rural areas. These should be discreetly located so that the visual impact of any tanks is minimised.



Discreet venting tiles and flue on the least visible elevation

Waste Treatment

- The disposal of waste water and sewerage may pose a challenge in rural areas, but environmentally acceptable methods should be utilised wherever possible.
- If installations such as septic tanks or cesspits are necessary, these should be located where they have minimal visual impact through undergrounding or appropriate screening. It may be necessary in certain circumstances for such equipment or plant to be sited within existing buildings in order to reduce the visual impact.

Landscaping

- It will not be appropriate for large areas of hard surfaces to be introduced where these did not exist previously. Any new hard surfaced areas, where they are considered to be acceptable, should be constructed in materials that are traditional for the area.

Parking and Access

- The original access serving the buildings should be utilised unless this would not be appropriate in the interests of highway safety. New accesses or improvements to existing access will only be permitted where there is no detrimental impact on the character or biodiversity value of the area.
- The upgrading of access roads/tracks may have a detrimental impact on the landscape and therefore, if improvements to existing access roads are necessary, appropriate materials should be used that minimise the visual impact.
- Where access is from a country lane, entrance gates should be set back from the main road to ensure that entrances can be used as passing places where necessary.
- The level of parking provision should accord with the required number of spaces for the proposed use class as set out within *Supplementary Planning Guidance LDP5: Car Parking Standards* for the type of use proposed.
- Garage parking should be accommodated within other existing buildings within the curtilage wherever possible.
- A new garage will only be acceptable if there are no suitable buildings within the curtilage that can be converted and where the visual impact of a new garage building can be minimised.
- Any new garage building should be single storey and at an appropriate scale for parking use. It should be constructed using materials that are appropriate to the local context.

Energy Efficiency

- Non-residential development over 1000 sq m (including replacements but not conversions or extensions) is required to meet BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as well as achieve 'Excellent' under ENE1 – Reduction of CO2 Emissions.

- New dwellings are required to meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 plus obtain additional credits under ENE1 – Dwelling Emission Rate.
- Applicants should refer to *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 22: Planning for Sustainable Buildings* and *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design* for further guidance on how sustainability standards can be achieved.
- Where low and zero carbon energy technologies are proposed, consideration should be given to whether these can be incorporated in a manner that is suitable for the setting of the area.
- Technologies such as solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and wind turbines will only be acceptable where the effect of these technologies on the appearance of the building can be minimised.
- Where PV or solar thermal collection panels are used they should be located in discreet locations wherever possible and should avoid principal elevations. Evolving technologies, such as PV cladding that replicates the appearance of natural slate, means that the impact of any panels can be significantly reduced and will therefore be encouraged.
- It may be preferable for any micro-generation equipment to be sited on existing outbuildings or as freestanding units within the curtilage of the existing building.



PV Roof Cladding replicating the appearance of slate



Free standing solar panels in a discreet location



Natural Heritage

- Many buildings in the countryside provide a suitable habitat for a number of species including bats, barn owls and nesting birds. It will therefore be necessary for an ecological survey, including a protected species survey, to be undertaken prior to the submission of an application for the conversion or replacement of a building in the countryside. The submission of bat and/or barn owl surveys is required prior to determination of a planning application. If these surveys are required by the local planning authority and are not submitted, the application may be refused. Bat surveys should be carried out by a suitably qualified, licensed professional between the months of May and September. Further details can be obtained from the Council's ecologists (see Section 9 for contact details).
- Trees and hedgerows should be retained as part of any development. Where necessary, the local authority will use TPO powers to protect trees and woodlands. Applicants should refer to LDP4 Trees and Development for further guidance on the protection and incorporation of trees and hedgerows within developments.
- Developments should also avoid any negative effects on dry stone walls as these form an important wildlife habitat, as well as being an important component of the landscape.

8. OTHER BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

This section seeks to provide guidance on other types of buildings that may be acceptable outside of defined settlement boundaries.

8.1 Buildings Associated with Agriculture and Forestry

8.1.1 In many cases the erection, extension or alteration of buildings for the purposes of agricultural or forestry will be classed as permitted development, meaning that planning permission will not be required. However, if planning permission is required due to the size, location or nature of the proposed building, the following principles will apply:

- It is likely that new agricultural or forestry buildings will be modern in character. Due to their scale, these modern buildings may be prominent features on the landscape. They should therefore be sited to ensure minimal visual impact by being located, where possible, in low-lying areas rather than exposed ridges.

- Buildings for agricultural or forestry purposes should be designed for the use intended. It will not be appropriate for buildings to be domestic or industrial in character or standard.
- The use of appropriate screening to minimise external effects is encouraged.
- New buildings should be grouped with existing buildings where possible rather than being isolated, in order to limit the visual impact of developments.
- Roofing and wall materials should be dark in colour and should use non-reflective materials to minimise the effect of glare. Shades of grey are also known to be effective in blending in with their immediate surroundings.
- Where forestry buildings are located within woodlands, the use of wood would be an appropriate building material to ensure that the building blends into its surroundings.
- Large single buildings such as agricultural sheds will have a greater visual impact than smaller units. Options to develop smaller units rather than single large units should therefore be considered.
- Where the nature of the new or extended building may raise concerns over amenity through potential noise or smells (such as buildings used to store slurry or for the keeping of livestock), the proximity to existing dwellings should be given due consideration. Buildings should be sited to minimise potential conflict.
- It is likely that vehicular access may be required to serve the buildings and they should therefore be sited where a safe access can be secured.

8.2 Stables

8.1.2 Stables are an acceptable use outside of defined settlement boundaries as it is a recreation proposal that is normally suitable for a countryside location. Planning permission will be required for the development of stables, unless the horses are being used for farming or the stable is within the curtilage of a dwelling (i.e. in a large garden rather than a paddock), as these may enjoy permitted development rights.

8.2.2 Where planning permission is required for a stable, the following matters need to be considered:

- The stable should be sited so that it minimises its potential visual impact, taking advantage of natural screening opportunities where appropriate.
- Any means of enclosure for horses within a paddock should be sensitive to the rural context within which it is located.
- Stable buildings should be single storey and should be at an appropriate scale for the number of horses it is proposed to accommodate.
- The materials used for any stable block should normally be wood as this is considered to be appropriate for the rural context. The design should not be industrial or domestic in character.
- Adequate access will be required to ensure that vehicles with horse trailers can enter and leave the site safely.
- The erection of a ménage for private domestic use will only be permitted where it is appropriately designed so that it has no adverse effect upon the landscape in which it is located. The ménage should be well related to existing buildings and at an appropriate scale.
- Commercial stables and ménages are considered to be appropriate rural businesses where these can be accommodated without harm to the character to the area and are considered acceptable in highways terms.
- The ecological value of any land needs to be considered as the grazing and exercising of horses on areas of species-rich grassland may be detrimental to biodiversity. The use of land for equestrian activities and associated stables should therefore be avoided on Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), unless the grazing of horses is at an appropriate scale and would benefit the biodiversity value of the site. Evidence would need to be submitted to support this in the form of an ecological report by a suitably qualified professional.
- Conditions will be attached to any consent granted restricting the use of the land to the keeping of horses and preventing the storage of containers or caravans or the erection of other structures associated with that use where necessary.

9. CONTACTS

For general enquiries on planning policies for buildings in the countryside please contact:

Strategic Planning, Planning Division, Pontllanfraith House, Blackwood, NP12 2YW.

Tel: 01495 235376

Email: ldp@caerphilly.gov.uk

For pre-application enquiries, potential developers should contact:

Development Control, Planning Division, Pontllanfraith House, Blackwood, NP12 2YW.

Tel: 01495 235196

Email: planning@caerphilly.gov.uk

For further information on listed buildings please contact:

Conservation and Design Officer, Planning Division, Pontllanfraith House, Blackwood, NP12 2YW

Tel: 01495 235235

Email: planning@caerphilly.gov.uk

For enquiries relating to ecology matters, please contact:

Ecologist, Countryside and Landscape Services, Planning Division, Pontllanfraith House, Blackwood, NP12 2YW.

Tel: 01495 235253

Email: countryside@caerphilly.gov.uk



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