

## **Housing in rural areas**

**4 July 2008**

### **Jane Davidson, Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing**

I am announcing on Monday 7 July, further planning policy initiatives to help us to deliver our One Wales commitments about affordable housing. The document to be published on Monday is intended to improve the sustainability of rural communities. We have been able to incorporate the affordable housing planning issues raised by the recent Joseph Rowntree Report and the Essex Report.

The key changes in the consultation document propose:

#### **Essential dwellings:**

That any legitimate rural enterprise, not just the farming and forestry industries, could apply to build a dwelling in the countryside for the owner's use provided the business need for it can be demonstrated. Research has indicated that there are accommodation difficulties for rural workers and we need to widen the scope of what are known as "essential dwellings" to all types of rural enterprises. Also any rural worker in an established rural enterprise could apply for a new dwelling if there were a business need for the worker to live at or close to their workplace rather than in a nearby settlement. The new dwellings would be classified as affordable housing.

#### **Agricultural succession:**

Support for new entrants to farming by allowing a second dwelling within the farm complex or adjacent to the farm access to facilitate the succession of a farm business. This enables an existing farmer progressively handing over responsibility for the farm management to have a home. The new dwelling will be classified as affordable housing. Lack of suitable accommodation could be hindering succession.

#### **Existing farm holding – additional dwelling**

A second dwelling (classified as affordable housing) could be provided where the existing occupier of the farm house works full-time on the farm and the applicant for the new dwelling has a functional need to work part-time on the holding - we are suggesting 20 hours a week averaged over the year.

#### **General market housing- affordable housing contributions**

All general market housing including single dwellings and conversions should contribute to affordable housing. We are proposing that the commuted sums generated will be held by the local authority and used to provide affordable housing directly or help its provision by employing a rural housing enabler for example or contributing to a community land trust.

#### **Housing within small groups or cluster sites in the open countryside**

Housing plots within or adjacent to small housing clusters that become available should be limited to people in need of affordable housing and who work in the local community.

### **Affordable Housing exception sites**

At the moment we have rural exception sites, within or adjoining rural settlements, that are not in the development plan to be used for affordable housing only. We are taking forward the Essex Report recommendation and asking whether this policy could be taken up for all communities in Wales not just in rural areas.

### **Low Impact Development**

LID is development that through its low negative impact either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality. Scheme members typically live and work on the same site and aim for self sufficiency for their livelihood with energy, water use, drainage, sewage and waste disposal provided on site. We are suggesting that local planning authorities might consider policies or identify suitable sites for such schemes.

The consultation will start during the week of 7<sup>th</sup> July and will run until 10 October 2008. Following consultation, the revised policies we intend to take forward will be consulted upon in a draft Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement. Technical changes to planning guidance will be incorporated in draft revised versions of Technical Advice Note 6 "Agricultural and Rural Development" and Technical Advice Note 2 "Planning and Affordable Housing.