

MALVERN HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Re-Use of Rural Buildings
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Sustainability Appraisal

June 2006

Malvern Hills District Council
Planning Services
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Sustainability Appraisal (SA) sets out the framework for the District Council's Supplementary Planning Document entitled The Re-Use of Rural Buildings. This SA looks at the need for the document, the relevant planning policies and local community aspirations that underpin it and provides an assessment of these in relation to the principles of sustainability. The SA also describes the various stages in the preparation and adoption of the advice contained in the document and the consultation involved in the process.
- 1.2 The Government's broad objectives of sustainable development are recognised to involve the interlinked factors of the social needs of the local population; protection of the environment; the prudent use of natural resources and maintenance of economic growth and employment.

2. Context and 'underpinning' policies

- 2.1 A report to the Council's Planning Committee on 6th December 2005 explains the reasons for preparing the Draft SPD.
- 2.2 This SPD was prepared during the review of the Malvern Hills District Local Plan (1996-2011) and linked to draft Policy EP6 of the Second Deposit Draft version of the Local Plan and Policy D16 of the adopted Worcestershire County Structure Plan. Following receipt of the Local Plan Inspector's Binding Report in May 2006, minor changes were made to the Policy EP6 which did not materially affect the implementation of the policy through the SPD. The Local Plan was adopted on 12th July 2006 and Policy EP6 is therefore the principal policy against which proposals for the re-use of rural buildings will be assessed.
- 2.3 The District Council considers that the preparation and the adoption of the SPD will help promote certainty in drawing up plans and result in proposals which are more likely to be acceptable to the Council and so ensure less conflict over planning applications.
- 2.4 The SPD is specifically linked to Policy EP6 (Re-Use of Rural Buildings) in the adopted MHDLP and provides greater guidance and interpretation on the use of Policy for Malvern Hills District.

3. Key issues

- 3.1. The guidance aims to strike a fair balance between the wishes of those who want to seek new uses for rural buildings, the amenities of occupiers of existing neighbouring residential properties and the interests of the wider community. One of the key issues identified in the policy is the presumption in favour of employment uses rather than housing. This is to prevent the creation of dwellings in remote locations where access is generally only available by car and to support the local economy.

4. Sustainability Impact and effects

- 4.1 A detailed Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken by the District Council in preparation of the MHDLP and forms an appendix to that document. This can be viewed on the Council's website: www.malvern hills.gov.uk. This assessed whether the aims of the Plan were consistent with other policies plans and strategies to deliver 'sustainable development'. It also examined individual Local Plan policies against a set of criteria which reflected the concept of sustainability. The re-use of rural buildings forms sustainable development and helps to conserve land and soil quality and minerals. The rural location of schemes may have negative impacts in terms of increased trip length and frequency and the availability of alternative forms of transport to the car. In respect of Policy EP6 – The Re-Use of Rural Buildings, the analysis concluded that in relation to the individual sustainability factors, the policy would have a largely positive impact.
- 4.2 The SPD needs to have the same sustainability assessment and this is shown in the following table with further commentary:

Sustainability Matrix

Sustainability factor	Sustainability Impact	Comment
Transport Energy - Trips	Negative	By reason of their former function, rural buildings are often remote from district centres and settlements. Consequently, the re-use of such buildings for business use is likely to generate trips, particularly by the private car. However the SPD supports the concept of live-work units which would remove the need to make trips for the purposes of travelling to work and therefore reduce dependence on the private car. In addition, MHDLP Policy EP6 seeks to ensure that proposals are located with reasonable access to a range of transport modes, other than the car (criterion f) therefore given this primary control and the fact that the existing use would in many situations include transport related activity, the SPD is not considered to warrant further changes.
Transport Energy -modes	Negative	By reason of their former function, rural buildings are often remote from public transport routes. (Please refer to above on locational issues)
Built Environment - energy efficiency	Positive	The converted building or any new development would have to meet current Building Regulations which promote energy efficiency. The SPD states that development of the site should incorporate energy and water conservation measures.
Renewable Energy potential	Neutral	The SPD acknowledges that the remoteness of some rural buildings presents an opportunity to look to alternative means of generating energy from renewable resources.

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Rate of CO ₂ Fixing	Neutral	The SPD and MHDLP Policy QL21, encourages appropriate and sensitive tree planting and retention of existing tree cover. This will apply to all re-use of rural building proposals.
Biodiversity	Positive	The Concept Statement advocates the retention of the mature trees and hedges which provide a habitat for local wildlife.

Sustainability factor	Sustainability Impact	Comment
Air Quality	Neutral	The re-use of rural buildings is likely to generate trips, but control will still be exercised over excessive vehicle movements in rural locations. Energy supply to rural buildings can by alternative forms of energy which reduce CO ₂ emissions.
Water Conservation	Neutral	Providing isolated sites with a mains water supply can have a negative sustainability impact but there are opportunities to consider alternative sources of supply and the interception and recycling of rainwater.
Land and Soil Quality	Positive	The re-use of buildings reduces the need for new development and thereby helps to conserve land and soil quality and minerals.
Re-using previously developed land and buildings.	Neutral	Although agricultural buildings are 'greenfield' buildings, their conversion does make use of an existing building and therefore avoids new build on 'greenfield' land.
Safeguarding mineral resources	Positive	The re-use of existing structures places less demands on mineral resources.
Landscape and the Countryside	Positive	The SPD seeks to ensure that new uses are contained within the established curtilages / boundaries without incursion in to the surrounding open countryside and can, subject to compliance with the development plan, result in beneficial enhancement of an area
Built environment and 'liveability'	Positive	The SPD advocates retention and conversion of the existing building which provides an opportunity for enhancement of buildings. The SPD introduces many elements of control to ensure that maximum consideration is given to enhancing the built environment.
Cultural heritage	Positive	The SPD advocates the retention of any historic buildings and its intrinsic features both internal and external.
Rivers and flooding	Neutral	These issues are addressed through MHDLP Policy DS16.

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Public access to open space	Neutral	The SPD highlights the need to be aware of public rights of way which provide access to the countryside and could be obstructed by new development associated with the re-use of rural buildings.
Housing	Positive	Whilst the SPD seeks to encourage business use in preference to residential uses, it is acknowledged that the re-use of such buildings can contribute to the provision of sustainable housing opportunities.
Providing for community needs	Neutral	The SPD would have to be read in conjunction with other Community Needs Policies in the MHDLP, such as CN2 which requires the provision (or site) of affordable housing as part of a housing proposal over five units in the rural areas.
Community safety	Neutral	The re-use of rural buildings which are remote from other activities can help discourage anti-social behaviour in buildings which are unused and don't benefit from natural surveillance.
Providing employment	Positive	In line with Policy EP6, the SPD seeks to ensure that employment opportunities are addressed as a primary consideration in any re-use proposal.
Vitality of centres	Neutral	The amount of floorspace generated from the re-use of rural buildings is likely to be small and will not undermine the vitality of district centres. The re-use of rural buildings will also reduce the pressure for development of greenfield land on the fringe of district centres.

5. Consultation and process

- 5.1 The public consultation undertaken on the SPD complies with the arrangements set out in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. The publication of the SPD was advertised in the local press and was made available for inspection at the Malvern Customer Service Centre, Tenbury Area Office and Upton Library and on the Council's website. Copies of the SPD were sent to Parish and Town Councils together with representatives of the development industry, such as architects and agents who regularly submit applications to the District Council. Further details are included in the accompanying "Consultation Statement" published alongside this document and the SPD.
- 5.2 Formal consultation on the SPD took place for a six week period beginning Friday 13th January 2006 and ending at 5:30pm on Friday 24th February 2006. All representations were reported to Planning Committee on 15th June 2006.

6. Monitoring and review

- 6.1 The District Council will continue to monitor the usefulness of the SPD. The effectiveness of the document will be apparent both through an assessment of how well subsequent planning applications follow the guidance and development principles set out within it and in the event of appeals, how much weight is placed up it by the Inspector.

**Planning Services
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