



Purbeck Core Strategy Development Plan Document

Examination into the soundness of the plan

Statement on behalf of Purbeck District Council

Hearing date: Thursday 10 May 2012 – 2pm

Matter 10: Countryside (Policy CO)

Issues

- 10.1 Is sufficient protection afforded to the AONB?
- 10.2 Is the Council's approach towards the re-use and extension of rural buildings justified?

Introduction

1. This statement considers all the issues within Matter 10: Countryside (Policy CO).

Statements of common ground

2. No statements of common ground have been submitted in relation to this Matter.

Why the Council considers the Core Strategy sound

3. Each issue raised by the Inspector is considered in turn below:

10.1 Is sufficient protection afforded to the AONB?

4. The Core Strategy has to be read alongside the NPPF, and the NPPF highlights the importance of protecting the AONB (para 115). Policy CO: Countryside is applicable to any location outside of a settlement boundary and aims to be flexible to allow certain types of development, subject to strict criteria. This is to ensure that inappropriate development does not occur in countryside locations. Therefore, the combination of the NPPF and Policy CO will provide a sufficient basis for the determination of planning applications for development proposals in the AONB.
5. The Council's statement on Matter 19 draws the Inspector's attention to the proposed additional wording for Policy LHH: Landscape, Historic Environment and Heritage. The proposed wording states that 'assessments of impact will be made relative to the significance of the asset affected'. Given that the NPPF attaches significance to protected designations such as the AONB, this additional wording adds greater weight to protecting the AONB.
6. The combination of Core Strategy policies CO and LHH with the NPPF means that sufficient protection is afforded to the AONB. Therefore, there would be no merit in revising the wording of Policy CO to specifically mention the AONB.

10.2 Is the Council's approach towards the re-use and extension of rural buildings justified?

7. The NPPF requires planning policies to support economic growth in rural areas. This includes the expansion of business and enterprise, which can be achieved through the conversion of existing rural buildings. The NPPF also supports sustainable rural tourism, new local services and community facilities. Elsewhere, the NPPF allows for the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for housing, where it would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting. The Council's Minor Changes Schedule already proposes additional wording to bring Policy CO in line with the NPPF and allow the conversion of rural buildings to housing. Clearly, the NPPF advocates a range of uses for converted buildings with no preference for any in particular. Therefore, as Policy CO allows for a range of uses, this is entirely consistent with the NPPF.
8. The policy ensures that any rural buildings proposed for re-use have to be of permanent and substantial construction. This is to ensure that the converted building does not significantly change the impact of the building on the countryside. The requirement for works to traditional agricultural buildings to comply with District design guidance is justified to make sure the intrinsic character of the building and

the contribution it makes to the countryside are not harmed. This approach is entirely justified, given the sensitive landscape in Purbeck. The NPPF also attaches weight to retaining the openness of the green belt. Therefore, ensuring buildings proposed for conversion are of permanent and substantial construction is entirely justified.

9. Having regard to the extension of rural buildings, the purpose of the restrictions in the policy is to ensure that an extended building would not have more of an impact on the countryside. The consequence of excessive extensions is that they can result in harm to the openness of the countryside and lead to its domestication. This would be contrary to the above-mentioned aims of the NPPF to protecting landscapes from inappropriate development.

Suggested changes for the Inspector to consider

10. Update the policy as per changes 72 - 75 of the Minor Changes Schedule¹. In particular, 73 and 75 bring the policy in line with the NPPF's allowance for the conversion of rural buildings to housing; changes 74 and 75 will ensure that replacement buildings should be in the same position as the existing buildings (this is because new buildings in different locations are not considered replacements); and change 75 also requests a structural survey to demonstrate that a building proposed for re-use is of substantial construction. Changes 73-75 will be consulted on as a modification to the Core Strategy after the hearings have been completed.

¹ SD26: Minor Changes Schedule