



Guidance Note for Applicants - Policy SS2: Rural Settlements – Residential Development

Following the publication of the Five-Year Housing Land Supply 2020-2025, November 2020 and the conclusion that SSDC can demonstrate a housing land supply equivalent to 6 years, it is considered that full weight can again be attributed to Policy SS2.

This guidance seeks to clarify existing planning policy SS2 Rural Settlements. This is not planning policy, and is not part of the statutory Development Plan. However, it is an explanatory document that helps to identify how the requirements of Policy SS2 may be viewed in assessing development proposals - particularly residential applications. **It is on a without prejudice basis and does not replace formal pre-application advice.**

South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028, March 2015 [Link](#)

Policy SS5: Delivering Housing Growth

Policy SS5 identifies a target of 2,242 dwellings in Rural settlements between 2006-2028, this target has already been exceeded.

Policy SS2: Development in Rural Settlements

Policy SS2 sets out the approach to development in Rural Settlements and is replicated below:

POLICY SS2: DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS

Development in Rural Settlements (not Market Towns or Rural Centres) will be strictly controlled and limited to that which:

- Provides employment opportunities appropriate to the scale of the settlement; and/or
- Creates or enhances community facilities and services to serve the settlement; and/or
- Meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing.

Development will be permitted where it is commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, provides for one or more of the types of development above, and increases the sustainability of a settlement in general.

Proposals should be consistent with relevant community led plans, and should generally have the support of the local community following robust engagement and consultation.

Proposals for housing development should only be permitted in Rural Settlements that have access to two or more key services listed at Paragraph 5.41.

Note: The requirement to have the support of the local community has not been supported at planning appeal and cannot be enforced. However, we would encourage applicants to consult locally particularly with Parish Councils as their support may be helpful in balancing a recommendation.

Overview

Paragraph 5.23 of the Local Plan identifies that there will be a presumption against development in Rural Settlements unless key sustainability criteria can be met and that these settlements will be identified as open countryside for planning purposes.



Given the restrictive nature of Policy SS2 applicants are encouraged to provide as much evidence as they can in support of their planning applications. Policy SS2 particularly supports the provision of the following types of homes:

- Affordable housing.
- Homes for young people who have grown up in the village and wish to have their own home there or who wish to move back to be close to family.
- Providing a home for an elderly person who lives in the village and wishes to downsize.
- A single dwelling as self-build for someone with a local connection to the community.

Scale of Development

Paragraph 5.30 of the Local Plan states that the application of the Policy will depend on the **size, role, function, local priorities, and constraints**.

“Therefore, the interpretation of Policy SS2 will depend on applying these factors in considering proposals at each individual settlement; for example a proposal that is acceptable in one of the larger Rural Settlements such as Templecombe, which has a relatively strong employment function and good sustainable transport links with the presence of a railway station, will be different to a smaller Rural Settlement such as Compton Dundon which does not have these features.”

Services/Facilities

Local Plan paragraph 5.41 states that a settlement is expected to have **two** of the following services in order for Policy SS2 to apply:

- local convenience shop;
- post office;
- pub;
- children’s play area/sports pitch;
- village hall/community centre;
- health centre;
- faith facility; and
- primary school.

Demonstrating Local Need

In paragraph 5.44 the Local Plan states the following:

“Housing proposals will need to fully explain how they contribute to meeting local need. This could be via delivering affordable housing, low cost market housing, or a different form or type of housing which is in limited supply for locals (e.g. small bungalows for elderly local households to move to and remain in the village, or two bedroom accommodation for young households). It will generally be expected that affordable housing is included as part of housing schemes proposed at Rural Settlements. The NPPF gives greater flexibility for local councils to set their own approach to delivering housing in rural areas. This includes considering whether allowing some market housing would enable the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.”

Various sources of information can be used to help demonstrate local need, including:

- A Local Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the Parish Council.
- A Local Housing Needs Assessment prepared by the applicant.
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, October 2016 (SHMA) [link](#)– most helpful in setting out the type and tenure of homes needed and the requirements of the aging



population. The document is district-wide and does not include detailed data on specific settlements.

- A neighbourhood plan for the settlement. Currently the SS2 settlements that apply are East Coker and Queen Camel. North Cadbury and Yarlinton and Compton Dundon are in the process of producing a neighbourhood plan but they are at an early stage.
- Parish/Community Plan – weight to be applied to these as a material consideration will depend on how up to date the document is.
- Homefinder – register of those in need of homes in bands of gold, silver or bronze – the Strategic Housing Team can provide information on specific settlements.

Whilst applications for 10 or more dwellings will be expected to provide 35% affordable housing, there is nothing in policy to prevent a development for less than 10 dwellings providing affordable homes or a scheme for 100% affordable housing. In smaller settlements a scheme of 10 or more dwellings may be considered to be unsuitable in terms of scale and impacts on local character.

Proposals for one or two dwellings, should aim to provide smaller sized market dwellings e.g. two or three bed which might then be suitable for an older person downsizing or be more affordable for a young person or family to move to or to self-build.

Where mixed use development is proposed evidence should be provided on the need for and viability of employment uses and/or community uses proposed.

Summary

When officers determine a planning application for a residential development in a settlement where Policy SS2 applies all the following elements will be balanced, alongside all other planning considerations:

- A presumption against development unless key sustainability criteria can be met;
- Size and scale of the settlement in relation to the proposal;
- Planning completions and commitments in the settlement since the beginning of the Local Plan period in 2006;
- Evidence of local need; and
- Size and tenure of dwellings proposed.