

## SWDP 19: Dwellings for Rural Workers

- A. Proposals for permanent agricultural, horticultural, forestry and rural enterprise-related dwellings will be permitted provided that:**
- i. The functional and economic tests contained in Annex G are met;**
  - ii. No dwelling serving or closely associated with the holding has been sold or changed from residential use, or otherwise separated from the holding within the previous five years;**
  - iii. The dwelling does not exceed 150 sq.m. of net usable floorspace, unless a larger property is robustly justified;**
  - iv. Where practical for its purpose, the dwelling is located close to existing buildings / dwellings, to minimise its visual and environmental impact; and**
  - v. Planning conditions are imposed to control the occupancy of the dwelling to ensure that it cannot be sold on or sublet for general accommodation unrelated to the enterprise.**
- B. For a new agricultural, horticultural, forestry or other rural enterprise, a time-limited permission may be granted for a temporary dwelling, such as a mobile home or caravan, until the economic viability of the enterprise is established. Applications for such dwellings must meet the functional and economic tests contained in Annex G.**
- C. Temporary or seasonal accommodation requirements to serve rural enterprises will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but will need to demonstrate:**
- i. that there is a proven business case for the accommodation;**
  - ii. that there is no appropriate accommodation available in nearby settlements; and**
  - iii. that impacts on local services, landscape and amenity are mitigated.**

### Reasoned Justification

1. Dedicated housing for rural workers is still important to support agriculture, horticulture and rural occupations such as forestry, all of which help to sustain the rural economy.
2. New development in the countryside is strictly controlled. This has been the case in previous development plans in south Worcestershire and is also set out in national policy.

The Framework (paragraph 55) outlines the need to locate housing in rural areas where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It also states that local planning authorities should avoid new, isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances. The objective is to protect the countryside for its intrinsic character, natural beauty and resources for all to enjoy. New dwellings for those who can show an essential need to locate for work purposes in the open countryside will need to be justified to demonstrate that the dwelling will support an existing agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise where it is essential that accommodation is provided on site. For new enterprises, temporary consent may be given for non-permanent dwellings such as a caravan, until the economic merits of the enterprise are established. Applications for dwellings to support agricultural enterprises will need to demonstrate they meet the functional and economic tests outlined in Annex G.

3. Any new dwelling should be carefully sited to minimise its impact on the landscape and its surroundings and should, wherever possible, be located close to existing buildings or other dwellings.
4. Rural workers' dwellings shall not exceed 150 square metres of net useable floorspace (excluding garaging but including associated offices such as a farm office) unless it can be demonstrated through the submission of financial information that the associated holding can support a larger dwelling (see definition of net useable floorspace in the glossary). Housing for temporary or seasonal workers is an issue that needs to be addressed from time to time; for example, where horticultural enterprises need to employ pickers or packers at different times of the year. This type of activity is important to the rural economy. However, accommodating such workers on or near the site can be difficult in open countryside locations. A solution may be to provide temporary accommodation in the form of mobile homes or caravans, but this is not always appropriate, especially if large numbers of people need to be housed. Each case should be considered on its merits, but with a recognition that such workers can contribute to local enterprises and the local economy.