

Local Plan – Small Growth Villages Policy

- Summary: Provides an update to the proposed approach to housing growth in Small Growth Villages.
- Recommendations: **1. That Happisburgh is removed from the list of Small Growth Villages.**
2. That additional policy criteria are added to ensure that rural exceptions affordable housing schemes are prioritised in Small Growth Villages

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
Cllr J Toye portfolio holder for Planning	All Wards
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The new Local Plan defines a number of villages in the District as Small Growth Villages. In these locations it is not proposed to formally allocate land for future housing development but instead to allow for such development via the application of a policy which is supportive a small scale housing growth in locations both within a defined settlement boundary and adjacent to the boundary.
- 1.2 This is a significant shift in policy position and for the first time would allow for market housing in areas designated as Countryside in the Local Plan but only in the Small Growth Villages, and only in locations very well related to the currently built up areas. The policy is intended to operate in a way which allows for small scale development without the need to formally allocate specific sites. It is a response to an NPPF requirement that Local Plans should ensure that 10% of future growth is provided for on smaller sites of less than 1 hectare in size.
- 1.3 The draft Policy (attached as **Appendix A**) has a number of safeguards which are intended to mitigate the potential for adverse consequences. These are:
- Sites should be no more than 1 hectare in size
 - Total growth in the 'host' settlement should not exceed 6% over the Plan period. (excludes dwellings delivered under the rural exceptions policy, and
 - Compliance with all other Local Plan policies dealing with issues such as landscape impact, highways and so on is required.

2. Small Growth Village Selection

- 2.1 The selection of Small Growth Villages is determined by a specific methodology. In order to be selected the settlement must include a range of essential and desirable services such as a local primary school, shop, public house or village hall.
- 2.2 Members may recall that following the initial assessment Langham was removed from the list of selected Small Growth Villages due to the closure of the village shop. A similar scenario has happened at Happisburgh where the village shop and post office has secured planning permission for use as a dwelling. As the village no longer complies with the selection methodology it should be removed from the list of qualifying villages.

3. Modification to Policy Approach

- 3.1 Land which lies outside of the adopted development boundaries of settlements and which is designated as Countryside in the Local Plan is currently subject to strictly applied policies which largely prevent the erection of dwellings. The only exceptions to this are the delivery of affordable homes, building conversions and occasionally agricultural and other key worker accommodation which is shown to be essential.
- 3.2 This general presumption against general market housing is fundamental to the effective operation of the rural exception policy which delivers affordable housing in villages. It sets a clear policy expectation that land owners are unable to secure permission for market housing and consequently removes the 'hope' that such permissions will be forthcoming. This in turn reduces the value of land and is one of the major reasons that Housing Associations are able to bring forward schemes in these locations – they are not having to pay open market residential land values for building land.
- 3.3 The draft policy for Small Growth Villages risks changing this. Rather than removing the hope that a residential permission may be granted it positively indicates that such a consent is possible. This clearly risks reducing the potential land supply for rural exceptions affordable developments as land owners are likely to pursue market housing developments rather than offer land to Housing Associations.
- 3.4 To address this concern it is recommended that the following additional clause is added to the policy:

In the case of sites in excess of 0.25 hectares the site, together with any adjacent developable land, has first been offer to local Registered Social Landlords on agreed terms which would allow its development for affordable homes, and such an offer has been declined.

4 Recommendations

- 1. That Happisburgh is removed from the list of Small Growth Villages.**
- 2. That the additional policy requirement outlined in paragraph 3.4 is added to policy SS1 of the Draft Local Plan.**

5 Legal Implications and Risks

5.1 None

6 Financial Implications and Risks

6.1 Failure to undertake plan preparation in accordance with the regulations and NPPF is likely to render the plan 'unsound' at examination and result in the need to return to earlier stages. Substantial additional costs would be incurred.