

RURAL HOUSING POSITION

TATHAM PARISH COUNCIL BRIEFING NOTE 18.07.23

1. Sustainable Settlements Review

- 1.1 The status of the [Sustainable Settlements Review](#) is that it forms a piece of evidence which, in turn, informs policy contained within the Local Plan. The Review and its outcomes do not have any formal planning status, it is the planning policy contained in the Local Plan which will determine how housing will be delivered across the district. Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that the Review is an important piece of evidence to inform Policy SP2 of the [Strategic Policies & Land Allocations DPD](#) (which sets out the settlement hierarchy for the district).
- 1.2 The content of the Review seeks to be evidence driven but can only work on the evidence at the time. It seeks to capture information on service provision within each settlement, for instance transport links, employment opportunities and population / demographics. The content and output from the Review are based on the level of information that can be secured during its preparation – hence the importance of local communities input in the process. As with all evidence, nothing remains static, and the Review can only provide a snapshot in time in terms of the matters described.
- 1.3 In preparing an update to the Review, the Council will be considering how the methodological approach can be improved / refined and would always welcome input into that process from stakeholders. Consideration will be given to whether the proposed methodology should be subject to consultation (as was the case last time). The Council will also be considering whether the title of the document should be amended to ‘Settlement Review’ to better reflect the purpose of the assessment (i.e. it is an assessment of all settlements within the district).

2. Rural Housing Position – National Context (NPPF)

- 2.1 With regard to the response to the Review from Tatham PC and its concern over the delivery of rural housing within the Parish (or lack of) it is worth being mindful of direction provided at a National level through the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). The NPPF places a wide range of expectations on the City Council as Local Planning Authority (LPA), some of which appear contrary to each other. The NPPF needs to be read as a whole and its expectations balanced within the preparation of a Local Plan. In the context of rural housing delivery, I have provided below a number of statements within the NPPF which the LPA needs to be mindful of when preparing a Local Plan:

‘All plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to meet the development needs of their area, align with growth and infrastructure, mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects.’ (Para 11a)

2.2 As Tatham PC sits within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is a nationally designated landscape, a further element of paragraph 11 is applicable where it states:

*'Strategic Policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless the application of policies in this Framework [NPPF] that protected areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type and distribution of development in the plan area*⁷.'
(Para 11b(i))

2.3 With regard to footnote 7, the Framework is clear that the above statement relates to the protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.4 With regard to the provision of rural housing, the NPPF makes the following statements:

'In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be response to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs. Local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs and consider whether some market housing on these sites would help to facilitate this.' (Para 78)

'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for village to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, one village may support services in a village nearby' (Para 79)

'Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the [following] circumstances apply' (Para 80)

2.5 In the context of paragraph 80 above, those circumstances include the provision of housing for rural workers and farm workers, development would bring back into use a heritage asset, development would involve the re-use of a building which would enhance the wider setting, would involve the sub-division of an existing rural building or the design is of exceptional quality.

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.' (Para 176)

3. Local Planning Context – Lancaster District Local Plan

- 3.1 In the local context of rural housing delivery, the adopted Local Plan for the district is prepared in light of the national direction provided above. The NPPF suggests (via paragraph 11) that the LPA should be planning for most housing growth to be going in sustainable locations in order to create sustainable patterns of growth which are linked to service provision and transport accessibility. This is particularly important in the context of Climate Change and the avoidance of increasing the levels of trips needed to access the most basic of services or employment. That is the context in which [Policy SP2](#) is set where it identifies areas which should be the focus of new development in both urban and rural locations.
- 3.2 It is worth considering the implications if such a hierarchy were not in place. It would lead to potential speculative market housing growth across the district. Without any form of definition to where housing development should be supported in principle, it would create a vacuum where all areas see development taking place – even in the most isolated and unsustainable locations. It is therefore important that the Local Plan sets some sort of strategic direction on this matter.
- 3.3 Does this mean that housing should not come forward outside of Sustainable Settlements? No, there is clearly going to be a need for housing to be achieved in the smaller settlements in the district and within rural parishes such as Tatham. However, any housing which is provided in these areas should be to target a specific need rather than simply for general market housing. This could be, for example, to deliver affordable housing to allow existing residents of a village to stay in their communities, or specific housing to allow those who work in rural areas to live close to their workplace.
- 3.4 [Policies DM2](#) and, specifically for communities in the Forest of Bowland AONB such as Tatham PC, [Policy DM6](#) looks to set out direction on how new housing can come forward in rural locations. The direction provided in Policy DM6 does allow for new housing to come forward in rural communities but looks to carefully manage the type of housing that comes forward, particularly restricting the levels of market housing permitted.
- 3.5 In the context of Tatham PC that importance is elevated further due to its positioning within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Beauty, particularly when considering the direction of paragraphs 11b and 176 of the NPPF. The opportunities for development within these nationally designated landscapes is further restricted by potential impacts of setting and the [primary purpose](#) of the designation to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.
- 3.6 The LPA have seen the arguments over the primacy of protecting the landscape over delivery of housing successfully applied by a number of communities in the AONB through preparation of

neighbourhood plans, specifically [Wray-with-Botton](#) and more recently [Caton](#), which reflects the importance of balancing the protection of the nationally designated landscape.

4. Summary

- 4.1 Further delivery of general market housing in Tatham PC will be challenging with the current national and local planning policy context. This is not a location which currently the LPA consider suitable for general market housing due to its isolated location and its sensitivities given its positioning with the Forest of Bowland AONB. I note the arguments that further housing growth could lead to a boost to local service provision but it is not clear how such ambitions over new service provision will be realised nor the level of growth which would be required to secure and maintain such services. It is also doubtful whether the levels of growth needed would be acceptable in the context of the primary purposes of the AONB.
- 4.2 Whilst the opportunities for housing are clearly constrained with the Parish there is scope for small-scale housing delivery where it is clearly meeting a specific evidence housing need, whether that be for affordable housing to meet a local demand, housing for specific sections of the community or housing for rural workers. In those cases, Policy DM6 of the Development Management DPD sets a clear, if not rigorous, approach to how such housing can be delivered. It will require evidence of need to be provided as part of any planning application submitted.
- 4.3 As mentioned at the outset, the role of the LPA in preparing a Local Plan is to address a challenging set of sometimes competing ambitions within the NPPF, in this case the delivery of housing against the protection of the environment. In preparing the Lancaster District Local Plan the City Council have sought to make that balance in the most appropriate way possible, and the approach taken has been scrutinised by Government-appointed Inspector who concluded that the direction provided is consistent with national planning policy.
- 4.4 For the present time, the local policy direction in regard of rural housing delivery is set and there are no opportunities at this point to alter or amend the content of local planning policy. Changes to adopted Local Plan can only take place when the City Council formally decides to review the Plan. The need to review the Plan is regularly considered by the City Council but, at the time of writing this note, there has been no decision to undertake a review. At such a time that there is a decision to commence such a review, all Parish Councils, will be informed of that decision and will be kept informed and engaged through the review process.
- 4.5 There are a number of opportunities for the community to actively pursue the delivery of rural housing in the Parish, this could include the preparation of a neighbourhood plan which can seek to identify opportunities for housing within the Parish (further details on neighbourhood planning can be found

at www.locality.org.uk). The Parish Council could also investigate the role of the Community Right to Build which gives communities the power to deliver development in their locality (further details on the community right to build can be found at [CrTB_FAQs.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642243/CrTB_FAQs.pdf)).