

Consultation Title: Perth & Kinross Supplementary Guidance

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To: Perth & Kinross Council

From: Scottish Land & Estates

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Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) is a member organisation that uniquely represents the interests of both land managers and land-based businesses in rural Scotland. SLE has members with interests in a great variety of land uses within Perth & Kinross and we therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Housing in the Countryside

Much of rural Perthshire continues to have a reliance upon traditional rural activities focused upon agriculture, forestry and fishing. All of these industries have faced continuing challenges to their competitiveness with a consequential impact on the viability of the rural areas. SLE is therefore of the view that more weight should be given to economic benefits within planning policy for new housing developments in the countryside.

We are supportive of the need for supplementary guidance for housing in the countryside and can agree that Policy 19 should aim to “safeguard the character of the countryside; support the viability of communities; meet development needs in appropriate locations; and ensure that high standards of siting and design are achieved. However, in achieving these aims SLE would like to make the following suggested changes to the current draft:

- A Low Carbon Place
 - We consider it is not practical to expect existing on-site materials to be used in the construction of all new houses, extensions and/or boundary enclosures. Scots slate are very difficult to reuse and the cost of using native slate and stone are very high. Building in a rural context is already more difficult than in urban areas because of the cost of getting sites serviced – adding this blanket requirement will make building in the countryside prohibitive.

- Pre-application Discussions

- While this section highlights the importance of being in close proximity to public transport links and / or a settlement with access to services such as a school or a shop, SLE considers that it is equally important to note the proximity of housing to economic activity for creating successful, sustainable places.
- **New Houses in the Open Countryside**
 - SLE seeks clarity over what constitutes a natural as opposed to artificial boundary. It is our view that many existing mature boundaries will have been put there by humans and could therefore be described as artificial. It therefore follows that future bedding-in of appropriate landscaping should be considered as appropriate 'natural' boundaries. We are of the view that each application should be considered under its own merit rather than a blanket 'man-made versus natural' approach.
 - 3.3 Economic Activity. SLE is generally content with the wording of 3.3 up to the point at which the requirement for applicants to "display their entire landholding in order for the assessment to be completed" is mentioned. We consider that this is a disproportionate approach which brings no extra clarity for the planning authority in determining an application which should primarily be based on 'siting and design of houses in the open countryside'. To request this information is not necessary as applicants must have already demonstrated 'that the site they have chosen is the best possible option in terms of the fit within the landscape and reflects the traditional pattern and character of the area'. If this cannot be done, the planning authority can say so and request that another more suitable location be found. There is no need to request the applicant's entire landholding upfront.
 - Houses for farm workers – this section highlights animal welfare reasons but neglects to mention other farm operations which will require a constant workforce presence, for example, at harvest. The overarching issue of reducing carbon footprint also seems to have been neglected here (i.e. if the worker doesn't live onsite, they will have to drive from another location every day). The proposals also fail to recognise the requirement for housing created by the new Private Residential Tenancy (whereby a landlord can no longer get houses back for farm workers).
- **Brownfield sites**
 - Developing only 25% of a brownfield site with the requirement for both a portion attributable to affordable housing and the requirement for high end landscaping of the rest of the ground presents an enormous barrier on the grounds of cost of entry. Getting services to these sites in the first instance already tends to be more expensive.

As the proposals stand, it is our view that they will likely result in limited rural development due to costs involved. If we are to build rural communities that are resilient and can thrive in challenging and uncertain times, then it is crucial that planning authorities take an enabling, flexible approach to appropriate housing development in the countryside. SLE would welcome any further opportunity to engage in this topic.

Flood Risk and Flood Risk Assessments

SLE members appreciate the need for robust flood risk assessments and flood prevention measures to be taken in relation to new development. We also recognise the need to meet standards under existing legislation such as the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009. It is in this context that we make the below comments relating to the relevant draft.

We consider that the planning authority should take a pragmatic approach to the implementation of regulations where design can significantly mitigate and even contribute to eliminating flood risk in any development. It is our view that the planning authority can work with applicants to help mitigate risks in any development through adopting appropriate design such as SuDs etc. Crucially, our members are of the view that a landscape scale approach should be taken to flood risk. For example, additional tree planting and a small hydro scheme which can slow run-off rates should be viewed as flood risk mitigation and enable appropriately designed new development within the same water catchment area to take place.

SLE sees this as an example of a flexible approach on the part of the planning authority working with applicants which will enable Scotland's rural communities to thrive.