

## Guidance

# Housing needs of different groups

Advice on planning for the housing needs of different groups.

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From: **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** ([/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government](#)), **Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018 to 2021)** ([/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government-2018-2021](#)) and **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities** ([/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities](#))

Published 22 July 2019

Last updated 24 May 2021 —

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## Addressing the need for different types of housing

### How do the housing need of particular groups relate to overall housing need calculated using the standard method?

The standard method for assessing local housing need identifies an overall minimum average annual housing need figure but does not break this down into the housing need of individual groups. This guidance sets out advice on how plan-making authorities should identify and plan for the housing needs of particular groups of people.

This need may well exceed, or be proportionally high in relation to, the overall housing need figure calculated using the standard method. This is because the needs of particular groups will often be calculated having consideration to the whole population of an area as a baseline as opposed to the projected new households which form the baseline for the standard method. How can needs of different groups be planned for?

Strategic policy-making authorities will need to consider the extent to which the identified needs of specific groups can be addressed in the area, taking into account:

- the overall level of need identified using the standard method (and whether the evidence suggests that a higher level of need ought to be considered);
- the extent to which the overall housing need can be translated into a housing requirement figure for the plan period; and
- the anticipated deliverability of different forms of provision, having regard to viability.

Authorities must also consider the implications of their duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Further advice in relation to the housing needs of specific groups is provided in other sections of this guidance, see the separate [guidance on older and disabled people \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people), and the [Planning policy for traveller sites \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites).

Plan-making authorities should assess the need for housing of different groups and reflect this in planning policies.

When producing policies to address the need of specific groups, plan-making authorities will need to consider how the needs of individual groups can be addressed having regard to deliverability.

The household projections that form the baseline of the standard method are inclusive of all households including travellers as defined in [Planning policy for traveller sites \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites).

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 67-001-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## **How can private rented sector needs be assessed?**

Tenure data from the Office for National Statistics can be used to understand the future need for private rented sector housing. However, this will be based on past trends. The level of changes in rents, (known as “market signals”), may reflect the demand in the area for private rented sector housing. Evidence can also be sourced from the English Housing Survey, Office for National Statistics Private Rental Index, the Valuation Office Agency, HomeLet Rental Index and other commercial sources.

Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 67-002-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## **How can self-build and custom housebuilding needs be assessed?**

Most local planning authorities (including all district councils and National Park Authorities) are now required to keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in their area in order to build their own home. The [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding \(Register\) Regulations 2016](#) (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2016/105/contents/made>) set out these requirements. For further details, see [guidance on self-build and custom housebuilding registers](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding>).

To obtain a robust assessment of demand for this type of housing in their area, local planning authorities should assess and review the data held on registers. This assessment can be supplemented with the use of existing secondary data sources such as building plot search websites, ‘Need-a-Plot’ information available from the Self Build Portal and enquiries for building plots from local estate agents.

Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 67-003-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## **How can student housing needs be assessed?**

Strategic policy-making authorities need to plan for sufficient student accommodation whether it consists of communal halls of residence or self-contained dwellings, and whether or not it is on campus. Encouraging more dedicated student accommodation may provide low cost housing that takes pressure off the private rented sector and increases the overall housing stock. Strategic policy-making authorities are encouraged to consider options which would support both the needs of the student population as well as local residents before imposing caps or restrictions on students living outside university-provided accommodation. Local Planning Authorities will also need to engage with universities and other higher

educational establishments to ensure they understand their student accommodation requirements in their area.

Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 67-004-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## Affordable housing

### What types of households are considered to be in affordable housing need?

All households whose needs are not met by the market and which are eligible for one or more of the types of affordable housing set out in the definition of affordable housing in [Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>) are considered to be in affordable housing need.

Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 67-005-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

### How can affordable housing need be calculated?

Strategic policy-making authorities will need to estimate the current number of households and projected number of households who lack their own housing or who cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the market.

The unmet (gross) need for affordable housing by assessing past trends and current estimates of:

- the number of homeless households;
- the number of those in priority need who are currently housed in temporary accommodation;
- the number of households in over-crowded housing;
- the number of concealed households;
- the number of existing affordable housing tenants in need (i.e. householders currently housed in unsuitable dwellings); and
- the number of households from other tenures in need and those that cannot afford their own homes, either to rent, or to own, where that is their aspiration.

Care should be taken to avoid double-counting, which may be brought about with the same households being identified on more than one transfer

list, and to include only those households who cannot afford to access suitable housing in the market.

Suggested data sources: Local authorities will hold data on the number of homeless households, those in temporary accommodation and extent of overcrowding. The Census also provides data on concealed households and overcrowding which can be compared with trends contained in the English Housing Survey. Housing registers and local authority and registered social landlord transfer lists will also provide relevant information.

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 67-006-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

### **How can the current total affordable housing supply available be calculated?**

There will be a current supply of housing stock that can be used to accommodate households in affordable housing need. As well as future supply. Therefore, assessing the total affordable housing supply requires identifying:

- the number of affordable dwellings that are going to be vacated by current occupiers that are fit for use by other households in affordable housing need;
- suitable surplus stock (vacant properties); and
- the committed supply of new net affordable homes at the point of the assessment (number and size).

Sources of data: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government affordable housing supply statistics to show recent trends, and local authority and Registered Social Landlord records including housing register, transfer lists, demolition and conversion programmes, development programme of affordable housing providers.

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 67-007-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

### **How is the total annual need for affordable housing calculated?**

The total need for affordable housing will need to be converted into annual flows by calculating the total net need (subtract total available stock from total gross need) and then converting total net need into an annual flow based on the plan period.

The total affordable housing need can then be considered in the context of its likely delivery as a proportion of mixed market and affordable housing developments, taking into account the probable percentage of affordable housing to be delivered by eligible market housing led developments. An increase in the total housing requirement included in the plan may need to be considered where it could help deliver the required number of affordable homes.

Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 67-008-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## Rural Housing

### How can planning policies support sustainable rural communities?

People living in rural areas can face particular challenges in terms of housing supply and affordability, while the location of new housing can also be important for the broader sustainability of rural communities. Strategic policies will need to be informed by an understanding of these needs and opportunities, especially where authorities in designated rural areas wish to demonstrate that it is appropriate to [set lower thresholds for affordable housing than those which apply generally](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations#para023) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations#para023>).

The nature of rural housing needs can be reflected in the spatial strategy set out in relevant policies, including in the [housing requirement figures for any designated rural areas](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/5-delivering-a-sufficient-supply-of-homes#para65) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/5-delivering-a-sufficient-supply-of-homes#para65>). A wide range of settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas, so blanket policies restricting housing development in some types of settlement will need to be supported by robust evidence of their appropriateness. A [neighbourhood plan can allocate additional sites to those identified in an adopted plan](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#neighbourhood-plan-local-plan) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#neighbourhood-plan-local-plan>) so long as the neighbourhood plan [meets the basic conditions](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>).

Local planning authorities can support opportunities to bring forward [rural exception sites](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>) by working proactively with landowners and potential delivery partners such as parish councils and community land trusts.

Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 67-009-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## How can the need for isolated homes in the countryside for essential rural workers be assessed?

Considerations that it may be relevant to take into account when applying [paragraph 79a of the NPPF \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/5-delivering-a-sufficient-supply-of-homes#para79\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/5-delivering-a-sufficient-supply-of-homes#para79) could include:

- evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar land-based rural enterprise (for instance, where farm animals or agricultural processes require on-site attention 24-hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health or from crime, or to deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products);
- the degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future;
- whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process;
- whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site, providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and
- in the case of new enterprises, whether it is appropriate to consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.

Employment on an assembly or food packing line, or the need to accommodate seasonal workers, will generally not be sufficient to justify building isolated rural dwellings.

Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 67-010-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

## Rural Exception Sites

### Where can rural exception sites come forward?

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, rural exception sites can come forward in any rural location. In designated rural areas and areas designated as Green Belt, rural exception sites are the only sort of exception site that can come forward.

Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 67-011-20210524

Revision date: 24 05 2021

## **What sorts of affordable housing can be delivered on rural exception sites?**

Rural exception sites should seek to address the affordable housing needs of local communities. They can be used to deliver any form of affordable housing, including First Homes, provided this is supported by appropriate evidence of local need, such as a local housing needs survey.

Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 67-012-20210524

Revision date: 24 05 2021

## **Can rural exception sites deliver market housing?**

Rural exception sites can deliver a small proportion of market housing, provided that it can be demonstrated that this is necessary in order to ensure the overall viability of the site. Local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups are encouraged to produce policies that specify in further detail the proportions of market housing would be considered acceptable, and under what circumstances.

Other than allowing for market housing, what other ways can the viability of rural exception sites be improved? Where a local authority is satisfied because of the evidence provided that a rural exception site would not be viable if it were required to deliver only affordable housing, they may wish to consider whether alternative approaches to securing site viability could be pursued. This could include (but is not limited to):

- allowing for flexibility in tenure, size, or type of housing to be provided
- allowing for flexibility in the phasing of the development
- accepting the provision of a commuted sum to be used for provision of affordable housing on another site or sites
- obtaining other sources of funding such as grants

Plan-making authorities are encouraged to set policies that set out in greater detail the circumstances in which alternative approaches to viability would be considered.

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 67-013-20210524

Revision date: 24 05 2021

## **How can land for rural exception sites be identified?**



Organisations, local authorities, or individuals seeking to bring forward rural exception sites are encouraged to take a proactive approach to identifying suitable locations for rural exception site delivery through such measures as:

- actively seeking the details of relevant landowners and approaching them directly, in order to determine their level of interest in putting their sites forward for such developments
- working in collaboration with local communities, parish councils and other relevant groups to identify and deliver rural exception sites

Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 67-014-20210524

Revision date: 24 05 2021

### **How can rural exception site delivery be encouraged?**

Strategies for bringing forward rural exception sites will vary depending on local circumstances. However, where local authorities are keen to increase the number of rural exception sites that can come forward in their areas, or developers or landowners have site(s) that they wish to pursue, they may wish to consider establishing or strengthening working relationships with relevant groups including (but not limited to):

- parish and town councils
- neighbourhood planning qualifying bodies
- housing associations
- local landowners

Close partnership working between these different groups may assist in managing expectations in terms of the timescales, financial rewards and resource commitments required for effective rural exception site delivery.

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 67-015-20210524

Revision date: 24 05 2021

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Published 22 July 2019

Last updated 24 May 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

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