





PPS 7

- *Very occasionally, the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission.*
- *[It] should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example in its use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.*
- *The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the... characteristics of the local area.*

Housing Delivery

- "Three million new homes by 2020"
- On balance he means at least 750,000 should be built in areas classed as 'rural'



Demographic Change

- In the last 10 years the UK's rural population has increased by over 800,000
- Long term trend of 'counter urbanisation' driven by:
- Perceptions that quality of life is better in the countryside & worse in urban areas
- Reducing barriers to commuting by improved 'strategic' transport and Internet/communications technology
- 'Cashing in' on house price rises in London, before rural prices caught up

The Sustainability Trap

- Government policy for at least 15 years has been to ensure housing supply contributes to achieving 'sustainable communities':
- Desire to reduce CO₂ emissions by minimising dependence on car travel
- Desire to increase social cohesion, particularly in urban areas
- Desire to protect 'greenfield' land from development for good landscape and biodiversity reasons

The Sustainability Trap

But, what constitutes development sustainable?

The diagram shows three overlapping circles representing the pillars of sustainability: Environmental (top), Economic (left), and Social (right). The central intersection where all three overlap contains a checkmark (✓). The intersections between any two circles (Environmental-Economic, Environmental-Social, and Economic-Social) each contain an 'x' mark, indicating that while individual or pairwise goals may be met, the overall system is not sustainable.

Generally settlements are defined as "sustainable communities" if they have:-

- a school,
- a shop selling food to meet day-to-day needs
- village hall/community centre or a pub.
- public transport connection to a larger settlement.

Taylor's view was: ***"This cannot be sound planning, since it makes such communities less not more sustainable... This narrow view of sustainability is far too simplistic and wrong."***

- It also means that no settlement can become sustainable – what Taylor calls "the sustainability trap".

The Sustainability Trap

Unintended consequences perhaps?

- 1.Reinforcement of the long-term undersupply of all types of homes in rural areas
- 2.Contributes to housing characterised by low quality and poorly designed estates that harm the character of larger rural settlements and reinforce car dependence



The Sustainability Trap

- Increasingly unaffordable housing underlines economy as labour market is constrained
- Demand for local services declines (e.g. bus, P.O.)
- Skills drain from rural areas as young people are forced to leave – 100,000 young people to leave rural areas in next 4 years (National Housing Federation)



The Sustainability Trap

- Social effects of the 'sustainability trap':
- Social and economic polarisation between rural 'haves' and 'have nots'
- Service downgrading and closure leads to social isolation, particularly for those with no car
- Erosion of family and community ties as young move away and wealthy outsiders move in



The Sustainability Trap

- Environmental effects of the 'sustainability trap':
- Rapid growth in 'reverse commuting' (rural workforce drive in from cheaper housing areas in towns)
- Wealthy urban work force drive to urban centres reinforcing traditional commuting patterns
- Increased need to travel for services which are further away and less accessible by public transport /cycling



The Sustainability Trap

- Planning policy bias against building on 'greenfield' land to protect agricultural land, landscape and biodiversity
- National and local targets
- Emphasis on delivering development in larger service centres

Long-term Undersupply

But, Taylor challenges these assumptions:

- A smaller proportion of UK is 'developed' than imagined – 3 million homes could be delivered on less than 0.5% of UK's presently undeveloped area
- Much 'greenfield' land is monoculture agriculture with far less biodiversity than many 'brownfield sites'
- The bias towards building in larger centres is reinforcing the reduction in transport choices in rural areas as bus services disappear

Stagnating Villages

- The planning policy context leads to the 'writing-off' of small and very rural villages as too unsustainable for any new development at all.
- These villages may be very attractive and in protected landscapes and may already have few services.
- Little thought is given to the long-term effects on these villages or their inhabitants...they cannot thrive

Stagnating Villages

- The Government target for new homes in small rural villages (under 3,000 population) is 3,400 per year countrywide
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated that some 9,500 pa needed to stand still!
- The credit crunch has not helped – modest price reductions are off-set by a decline in credit availability and larger fees for new mortgages. Few rural homes benefitted from the stamp duty holiday.

Economic Factors

- Rural economy is relatively strong and it contributes far more to UK national economy than many think
- Huge changes in recent years away from 'traditional' sectors to diverse and dynamic sectors including knowledge and financial industries & manufacturing
- 1998 – 2006 there was a 46% increase in 'knowledge intensive businesses' (urban areas = 21%)
- Homework is very strong – 17% in rural areas vs. 8% in urban

	Urban (excl. London)	Rural
Output (GVA)	£170bn	£178bn
Workforce (jobs)	5.2m	5.5m
Productivity Index	97.4	97.3
Change in 2002-05	-2.4%	+5.6%

Economic Factors

- Appearance of wealth in rural UK hides much genuine poverty
- Average wages of people who live and work in the countryside is £4,653 less than UK national average
- Housing scarcity and steep prices 'creates skills deficit for low-paid professions (carers, social workers, teachers) – this constrains the economy

The Solutions

- The report calls for assumptions about delivery on greenfield sites to be challenged:
- Where these sites support little biodiversity and contribute only marginally to the landscape quality, they may be preferable to small cramped brownfield sites
- This must be part of a 'Masterplanning' approach that looks longer term and seeks to ensure that sufficient housing of the right kind according to needs (market and affordable) is provided in rural areas



Terry lived in the Green belt beside the Stockbroker belt which was inside the Commuter belt.

Solutions

- The report argues for the Masterplanning approach to be delivered through the LDF process. Key requirements to deliver better housing developments include:
- Taking a longer term outlook that does not seek to allocate the minimum land for the minimum possible number of homes
- **Ensuing that local communities participate fully in the production of Masterplans**

Solutions

- Ensuring that development is scaled (over a number of years) to be able to provide all the infrastructure that is needed
- The objective must be to create a 'community' and not a housing estate – creating destinations not routes to take cars to other places
- Innovative use of densities and open space to protect and enhance the character of market towns...

Design & Layout

(1) Bad housing growth: Doughnut development of tightly packed housing estates built up against the existing settlement with few additional shops, services, or amenity.

(2) Good housing growth: Creating self contained satellite neighbourhoods with mix of housing, employment and public green and open space benefiting both new and old communities.

Exception Sites

- Pioneered in 1989 for affordable housing in villages less than 3,000 population where houses would not normally be permitted.
- Houses must be affordable in perpetuity – not subject to 'right to buy'
- Must be a clear connection between homes delivered and local needs and community support is a vital part of the process

Exception Sites

- Taylor termed this approach "Community led affordable housing"
- It requires the planning authority to be proactive in seeking sites and helping deliver the homes
- The local community (particularly parish councils) have a clear role in this process as do Rural Housing Associations
- Taylor recommends that local communities should be able to initiate and expect planning authority support

"A high-rise block of flats would give many people a chance to enjoy a rural life..."

Revitalising Rural Communities

- Increase plan-led allocations – for mixed (market and affordable housing) developments.
- Allocations must be based on local needs and on viability assessments. Affordable housing likely to be viable due to high market house prices.
- Like the masterplanning approach for market towns, there must also a high level of community participation.
- The allocation must seek to ensure that services are enhanced and protected.

A photograph of a field of purple flowers, likely irises, with a text overlay. The text is in black and includes a title and a bulleted list.

Economic Protection

- Taylor recommends changing the national policy framework:
- To ensure existing rural employment sites are offered protection
- To realign the criteria for assessing new employment and commercial development
- And in both cases the key criterion should be the level of existing employment/commercial provision in that local community – in other words ensuring needs are met

A photograph of a field of purple flowers, likely irises, with a text overlay. The text is in black and says "Thank You."

Thank You.