

## **Matter 9: Locating Rural, Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy Development**

### **Issue 1: Development in the Countryside**

#### **Policy AP03 Development in the Countryside (Residential)**

##### **Question 1 - Differentiated countryside protection**

- 1.1.1. Yes, in principle: land performing an evidenced separation or Green Wedge function warrants different controls from other countryside. These are local designations, not Green Belt. [NPPE paragraphs 20\(d\) and 180\(a\)-\(b\), pp.9 and 52](#), support landscape and green-infrastructure protection while recognising countryside character more generally. The distinction must remain proportionate to the functions protected.
- 1.1.2. [AP03\(1\)-\(3\), pp.117-118](#), establishes three regimes: specified residential exceptions in ordinary countryside; a functional test in Areas of Separation; and rural-worker accommodation under criterion 1(b) in Green Wedges, subject to DS04. The Council expressly confirms that Areas of Separation do not have a prescribed list of uses: [Landscape Topic Paper, paragraph 6.33, pp.14-15](#). The justification therefore lies in preventing harm to their function, not applying an indiscriminate prohibition on housing.
- 1.1.3. STNT therefore supports the protection that these designations prove, but it is considered that the policy needs to be specific that where there is an overlap with allocations, as there is with SA02 / OA1, the Area of Separation Policy takes precedence. The Council's [paragraph 6.35, p.15](#), confirms that OA1 overlaps the proposed Oadby/Great Glen Area of Separation and that its restrictions still apply; however, this should be brought into the policy wording to make the policy more effective. Its further expectation that masterplanning minimise development there is not a substitute for AP03(2)'s requirement that development must not compromise the separation function. A housing allocation must be shown to work with that constraint; the constraint should not be diluted to accommodate its housing number. The allocation-specific reconciliation remains in Matters 5 and 7. [Reg19 section 8.1.2, pp.31-32](#).

**Question 2 - Clarity of criterion 1.a) i)**

- 1.1.4. No. [AP03\(1\)\(a\)\(i\), p.117](#), compresses site eligibility, evidence of need, lasting affordability and market-housing cross-subsidy into one sentence. These are separate requirements with different evidential consequences. Users should not have to disentangle them to establish what must be demonstrated.
- 1.1.5. The clause should be separated into cumulative sub criteria: a small rural exception site; identified local affordable-housing need evidenced by a rural needs survey or Neighbourhood Plan; affordable homes remaining affordable in perpetuity; and any market housing limited to the amount demonstrably necessary for delivery, with the scheme-specific percentage determined by viability and not exceeding the stated 20% cap. Make clear that perpetual affordability concerns the affordable homes, not the permitted market element. This clarifies the submitted requirements; it does not reopen the cap's numerical justification.
- 1.1.6. [NPPF paragraph 82, pp.22-23](#), supports rural exception sites and consideration of enabling market housing; [paragraph 16\(d\), p.8](#), requires unambiguous policies. Proposed [MM17.1, p.33/PDF p.34](#), alters paragraph 7.11, not this criterion. The clarity issue therefore remains. STNT's concern is effective delivery of genuine affordable housing, not a new objection to rural exception sites. [Reg19 section 8.1.5, pp.34-35](#).

**Policy AP04 Development in the Countryside (Commercial/Non-Residential)**

**Question 1 - Development types and the rural economy**

- 1.1.7. The listed categories are broadly appropriate, but national-policy consistency depends on their scope and safeguards, not simply the length of the list. [AP04\(1\), p.119](#), accommodates land-based activities, rural services, enterprise extensions, building reuse and tourism, alongside other countryside uses. [NPPF paragraphs 88-89, pp.24-25](#), support diverse rural businesses and community services, including appropriate locations outside settlements, while requiring sensitivity to surroundings and acceptable highway effects.

- 1.1.8. STNT does not advance a separate case for adding a commercial use or allocating another employment site. Its concern is that support for the rural economy must not become permission for development irrespective of location or cumulative impact. The Council's [paragraph 7.12, p.120](#), already says proposals must comply with other policies and suit their setting. Ensure that qualification is clear in the operative policy and preserve the distinct controls in parts 2 and 3. Proposed [MM18.1, p.33/PDF p.34](#), removes duplicated wording in the tourism limb; it does not address that relationship. [Reg19 sections 8.1.2 and 8.1.6, pp.31-32 and 35](#).

**Question 2 - Non-residential uses within protected areas**

- 1.1.9. Yes, in principle, but the controls must test the effects of the use, not merely its label. [AP04\(3\), pp.119-120](#), permits a narrower range in Green Wedges and expressly requires open character, green networks, public access and small-scale operationally necessary buildings. Those functional safeguards explain the distinction from ordinary countryside; the national-policy basis is set out under AP03 Question 1.
- 1.1.10. Areas of Separation instead rely on AP04(2)'s functional and cumulative test. Unlike AP03(2), it refers to other permitted development without expressly including existing development. The wording should be more aligned, and it should be made clearer that the cumulative assessment also addresses relevant planned allocations, rather than waiting until each gains permission. [DS04\(2\), p.37](#), protects existing visual and physical separation. That strategic objective cannot be tested adequately by considering successive proposals in isolation.
- 1.1.11. The [Council's paragraph 6.35, p.15](#), envisages green infrastructure, open space, biodiversity provision and drainage within allocation overlaps. Such uses can be compatible, but their associated buildings, access and engineering must also preserve the designated function. Calling land green infrastructure does not establish that result. Retain an explicit cumulative protection, whether here or through an equally clear DS04 cross-reference; do not remove it as mere duplication. The Panel should require a coherent policy test applied to the combined

development pattern. These policy clarifications do not dispose of STNT's separate objection to SA02's compatibility with the protected gap. [Reg19 section 8.1.2, pp.31-32.](#)