



Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

UDP Guidance Note: Policy ES25 Renovation of Former Dwellings

**The Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP)
Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was approved by the
Authority in March 2007.**

**This Guidance Note provides further detail on the practical
interpretation and implementation of Policy ES25**

**This Guidance Note will be used in the validation and
determination of planning applications.**

March 2009

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1. Introduction

Within the landscape of the Brecon Beacons National Park there are existing structures which are former dwellings. Many of these structures are well integrated within the landscape and can represent an important part of the cultural heritage of the National Park which, with skill, can be re-instated to their former use.

This Guidance Note illustrates the Authority's position in relation to the re-use of such buildings by detailing the steps required in the implementation of Policy ES25 of the Authority Approved Unitary Development Plan.

2. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

In planning for housing in rural areas it is important to recognise that development in the countryside should embody sustainability principles, benefiting the rural economy and local communities while maintaining and enhancing the environment. In order to safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside, to reduce the need to travel by car and to economise on the provision of services, new houses in the countryside away from existing settlements recognised in development plans, or from other areas allocated for development, must be strictly controlled (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006, Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 01/2006, Paragraph 9.2.21).

New house building and other new development in the open countryside, away from established settlements, should be strictly controlled. The fact that a single house on a particular site would not be unobtrusive is not, by itself, a good argument in favour of permission (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002, Planning Policy Wales, Paragraph 9.3.6).

Local Planning Policy

The emphasis on the rural economy in national planning policy is consistent with that reflected in the Brecon Beacons National Park, Authority Approved, Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The NPA's view is in certain circumstances support will be given for the renovation of former dwellings. However maintaining the character of the dwelling and its setting are important elements of this policy, as such development should contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Park's rural character.

However, it is worth noting at this stage that there will remain some rural buildings which, because of their location, orientation or dilapidation, will never be capable of re-use without imposing an unacceptable impact on the character of the surrounding area and through the unacceptable increase in vehicle movement. In such cases proposals would not be granted permission for renovation.

Unitary Development Plan Policy ES25

In detail, the Brecon Beacons Planning policy reads as follows:

Policy ES25: Renovation of Former Dwellings

The renovation of former dwellings in the countryside will be permitted where:

- i) at the time of application the existing building is demonstrated to possess the fundamental characteristics of the former dwelling in that:
 - a) the original wall structure is substantially intact and sound without the need for major or extensive demolition and rebuilding works and clearly shows the size, number and location of original window and door openings; and**
 - b) the building shows evidence of the original roof height, shape and features;****
- ii) any renovation required, where appropriate, retains or faithfully reproduces the size, number and location of original door and window openings and roof structure;**
- iii) the proposal, including any extension, the provision of services and changes within the curtilage, is appropriate to the scale and design of the original building and its setting. If necessary to keep control of this, permitted development rights may be removed;**
- iv) no new or enlarged curtilage is required; and**
- v) any new or enlarged road access can be provided without significant damage to the setting of the proposal or surrounding landscape.**

3. Pre-application Discussions

Applicants/ agents are advised to discuss with Development Control Planning Officers the likelihood of the building being suitable for renovation. For members of the public this can be achieved through the Authority's planning surgery service¹.

4. Application of Policy

Planning Policy Wales identifies (at para. 5.3.6) that National Parks consist of high quality landscape and scenic beauty and shall be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate development. In National Parks UDP policies and development control decisions should give great weight to conserving and enhancing

¹ BBNPA Planning surgeries provide informal pre-application advice and are held at HQ in Brecon (09:00-16:30) on Wednesdays. Such surgeries are also held at Abergavenny and Llandovery, please contact the National Park Office for details (01874 624437). Please note, this service is run on a first come first served basis or by appointment at the outlying centres.

the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of these areas. The following areas form the fundamental priorities of policy ES25:

The existing building is demonstrated to possess the fundamental characteristics of the former dwelling: The actual physical structure on site must possess the original structure in order that a visual inspection would clarify the numbers and types of openings and the original roofline. Whilst supporting evidence in the form of historical photographs would be of benefit these should not be looked upon as the only alternative source of information to demonstrate the existence of the former dwelling.

Curtilage: Policy identifies that no new or enlarged curtilage shall be allowed as part of a proposal for this type of development. This stand point is supported by Planning Policy Wales (Para 7.6.11), which whilst discussing the merits of the conversion of rural buildings clearly identifies that the creation of a residential curtilage would have a harmful impact on the character of the landscape and similar control to that of new housing in the countryside will apply. The fundamental viewpoint of this stance applies equally to an increase in the curtilage also.

Access: In the interests of the character and special qualities of the Brecon Beacons National Park any new or enlarged road access where considered to have a significant detrimental impact to said character and special qualities will not be acceptable.

Extensions: Any new extensions or outbuildings in relation to the renovation of former dwellings should respect the character and setting in which it is located and reflect the character of the existing building. When a new extension is designed for a building of special architectural or historic interest it should be fully accessible (PPW, 2002 para 4.4.5; BBNPA, 2008 Guidance for Policy ES26 & ES27).

All proposals to extend dwellings in the countryside must therefore:

- Be considerably smaller than the existing dwelling;
- Be lower than the existing dwelling in relation to ridge height;
- Be of similar form to the existing dwelling and constructed with material and patterns of openings that match; and
- Be subordinate to the existing dwelling with the original form of the dwelling being clearly recognizable when the new works are completed.

Permitted development rights: With regard to permitted development rights it may be necessary through the permission of the renovation of a former dwelling to remove permitted development rights in order to protect the character, setting and historical context of the structure and the area. With reference to permitted development under the General Permitted Development Order in the case of those units which have been abandoned and fallen into disrepair it may be difficult to demonstrate that the building is still a dwelling house.

5. Details required

In order to determine such applications additional detail will be sought in support of these proposals. In line with the Brecon Beacons National Park Validation Best Practice Guidelines the following details should be supplied:

- A clear set of plans and elevations of both existing and proposed details;
- Existing and proposed site layout plans;
- Proposed and existing site sections and a roof plan;
- Detailed drawings of window and door finishes and of all external decorative detail;
- Planning statement;
- Design statement;
- Access statement;
- Sustainability statement;
- Photographic survey.

Where necessary the following details will also be required:

- Landscaping plan with scheme of implementation and protection;
- Tree survey;
- Biodiversity survey and report;
- Structural survey.