

Examiners Question and response from Wellow Parish Council

Question 1 - Policies WP-H4 and H5

These policies set out the criteria for considering extensions to, or replacement of, existing dwellings. In each case, the resulting floorspace would be limited to an approximately 30% increase over the original, this being justified as a way of maintaining the supply of smaller dwellings in the Parish.

While recognising the importance of this issue locally, I note that TVLP Policies COM11 and COM12 focus entirely on the visual aspect of such developments and do not seek to make a case for restricting the resultant size of dwellings on housing need grounds.

Is there any evidence that would support a more restrictive view of residential extensions in Wellow than applies in the rest of the Borough (and ignoring the position in the National Park)?

Response from Wellow Parish Council:

In the submitted Plan at section 5.15 *Future Housing Provision*, paragraph 5.15.1 sets out the housing needs priorities:

- First time buyers – at a discount - House prices are unlikely to be affordable for first-time buyers on average incomes;
- Older persons seeking to downsize into a property which is adaptable for the future;
- Affordable homes (The Housing Department at TVBC have confirmed in writing that, at the time of writing, they would like to see at least 9 affordable dwellings to meet local needs)
- Housing for young families

And paragraph 5.15.2 states that, “a clear need was expressed by residents during the consultation process for:

- Bungalows (for those seeking to downsize)
- Smaller dwellings 2 -3 bedroom”

These priorities were derived from the Housing Needs Survey (HNS), the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and other community consultations. The HNS received returns from 39% of households mailed with the questionnaire. It was not a random survey and there was a definite bias in the returns towards the 65s and over and also owner-occupiers.

Nevertheless, the high number of returns gave a reasonable indication of housing needs if viewed with caution. Based on the 2011 census figures, the Parish does have a higher proportion of those aged 60+ (35.3%) when compared to the rest of the rural parishes in Test Valley (28.7%) which would indicate that the housing needs for this group are likely to be greater than for the rural parishes as a whole.

Further, there has been a steady erosion of suitable housing stock for “downsizers” and those needing starter homes through replacements and extensions. Housing before the

advent of mains drainage in the seventies was characterised by small developments of modest dwellings either singly or in small groups, often bungalows. These were often on large plots of land by current standards, building land being comparatively cheap in the Parish. This stock has been steadily replaced with larger dwellings often with four bedrooms, particularly in this century. These replacements are unsuitable for “downsizers” and unaffordable for first-time buyers and which runs counter to the local need as expressed through our consultations and surveys. Thus the policies at WP-H4 and WP-H5 are proposed to preserve this stock of smaller dwellings.

In framing our policies (WP-H4 and WP-H5) we modelled them on those contained in the New Forest National Park Authority’s Local Plan, specifically Policies DP35 (Replacement dwellings) and DP36 (Extensions to dwellings). Although only part of the Parish is within the National Park, we believe that we face similar issues in the remainder of the Parish as has been set out above. We are also seeking to maintain a broadly consistent approach with that adopted by the National Park across the whole Plan area albeit modified and simplified in line with feedback from the community consultation.

We trust that this adequately addresses to your question, clearly we would be happy to expand further on this if required.