

2.b. Building Groups

PAN 36 indicates that in addition to new housing development in settlements there is scope for adding to, or creating, small groups of housing in the countryside provided that they are sympathetic in terms of scale, proportion and materials to other buildings in the locality.

The Scottish Borders Council's policy is that in the countryside new housing will be encouraged to locate within or adjacent to building groups. Such development must meet the standard criteria as listed on page 7.

All applications for new houses at existing building groups will be tested against an analysis of:

- a) the presence or, otherwise of a group; and
- b) the suitability of that group to absorb new development.

The Scottish Borders Council considers that there are adequate opportunities for new development in the countryside at existing building groups and will resist the formation of new building groups.

2.b.1 Definition of a Building Group

The existence of a group will be identifiable by a sense of place which will be contributed to by:

- natural boundaries such as water courses, trees or enclosing landform, or
- man-made boundaries such as existing buildings, roads, plantations or means of enclosure.

Sites should not normally break into previously undeveloped fields, particularly where there exists a definable natural boundary between the existing group and the field. Natural boundaries should take precedence over man-made boundaries when defining the extent of a building group.



Figure 1: Edge of Building Group

Normally a group will consist of residential buildings comprising at least three dwelling units. Conversions may themselves constitute a complete building group. Building groups should not be allowed to expand by more than 100% from the baseline (see section 2.b.2), unless it can be demonstrated that additional development would provide overriding economic benefits.

Additionally, there may be locations where a more dispersed building pattern is the norm. These areas are referred to as “anchor points” and are found within the Southern Housing Market Area. A lower threshold may also be

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accepted in instances where the development would bring tangible environmental benefits. In all cases, the existence of a sense of place will be the primary consideration.

New housing within walled gardens will only be considered favourably if the walled garden is itself part of an existing building group.

In assessing the suitability of any particular group to accommodate new houses, other factors will also be taken into account:

- *The scale and siting of new development should reflect and respect the character and amenity of the existing group, and the individual houses within the group;*
- *New development should be limited to the area contained by that sense of place;*
- *Any new build should be located within a reasonable distance of the existing properties within the building group, the distance between existing properties and proposed new build should be guided by the spacing between the existing properties within the group;*
- *Proposals which involve the formation of new public roads for access (and public street lighting) will normally be of too large a scale;*
- *Sites should not normally break into a previously undeveloped field or require the removal of mature trees in good condition;*
- *Sites within 400m of existing intensive livestock units, will not normally be permitted unless required in connection with the farm or business itself;*
- *Sites close to working farm buildings or other rural industries will be given careful consideration to ensure no potential conflict;*
- *Existing groups may in themselves be complete, such as terraces of farm cottages and may not be suitable for further additions;*
- *Extensions of ribbon development along public roads will not normally be permitted;*
- *There will be a presumption against development which would result in the coalescence of a group with a nearby settlement;*
- *The use of Section 75 Agreements will be considered, for example, to restrict further housing at a building group.*

2.b.2 100% Rule

Subject to amenity, environmental and built form considerations, housing in the countryside policy prohibits building groups from being developed by more than 100%.

In assessing planning applications that propose an extension to a building group, the Council will not approve development that would be visually intrusive in the landscape, or detrimental to landscape characteristics, scenic quality or attributes of the existing building group. Therefore only sites that have little or no amenity, environmental, landscape or sustainability constraints, and provide a building design suitable to the building group will be considered acceptable. In addition to the criteria set out in this section, in

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assessing any application the above criteria in section 2.b.1 will also be taken into consideration.

The Council will also consider whether building groups should support further development or whether they are considered to be complete.

A group will be considered to be complete where further development could result in a detrimental impact on the building group.

In particular, the Council will carefully consider the potential adverse impact of additional development on those groups that have already been subject to recent development under the housing in the countryside policy. The amenity of the existing properties and householders is a primary consideration. The aim is to ensure that building groups are not subject to development that impacts on the amenity or character of the group to the detriment of residents. Even where an appropriate site exists, no further development will be permitted where residential amenity is compromised.

The 100% rule is calculated in terms of the existing number of housing units within the group as at the start of the Local Plan period, this includes those units which are being built, or have planning permission but building has not commenced. Therefore if a building group is made up of three housing units, the maximum it can grow is by three units and only where an appropriate development opportunity exists.