

PRESS RELEASE

Draft PPS 4 – All things to all development but master of none

When is a town centre use not a town centre use? Well, never, according to the draft PPS, even if it forms part of a regeneration proposal in rural areas.

Town centre uses and the 'town centre first' approach appear so rigidly cast that rural economic regeneration initiatives beyond the confines of those few lucky settlements defined in LDF's will be seriously constrained. It begs the question whether this document has been through any sort of rural proofing exercise.

The original draft PPS4 in 2008 had made constructive strides toward rectifying the confusing and damaging advice in PPS7, which has impacted seriously on rural schemes. The new draft seems to ignore the Matthew Taylor MP and CRC reports in this respect and reverts to an even more complex arrangement.

Whilst the PPS helpfully encourages the re-use of historic and other redundant buildings in the countryside, the primary alternative economic use for such property (B1 workspace uses) would be considered a town centre use and therefore effectively barred from consideration.

Equally, what about conversions of say redundant rural pubs to employment, retail and leisure uses. Town centre uses in a rural context?

We are fortunate in this country to have a legacy of fine buildings in rural areas that can be put to beneficial new uses and town centre type uses (particularly offices) are a key means of ensuring their long term sustainability. Without some qualification in the PPS such alternative 'town centre' uses will be seriously constrained.

I hope that - in reviewing representations - opportunities to assist the sustainable regeneration of the rural economy will not be lost for want of clear and unambiguous guidance that properly addresses rural economic development opportunities.

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