

Planning Policy Guidance 3: Housing

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Annex C: Definitions

Previously-developed land

There are various definitions of previously-developed land in use. For the purposes of this guidance, such land is defined as follows:

Previously-developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings), and associated fixed surface infrastructure¹. The definition covers the curtilage of the development². Previously-developed land may occur in both built-up and rural settings. The definition includes defence buildings and land used for mineral extraction and waste disposal³ where provision for restoration has not been made through development control procedures⁴.

The definition excludes land and buildings that are currently in use for agricultural or forestry purposes, and land in built-up areas which has not been developed previously (e.g. parks, recreation grounds, and allotments - even though these areas may contain certain urban features such as paths, pavilions and other buildings). Also excluded is land that was previously developed but where the remains of any structure or activity have blended into the landscape in the process of time (to the extent that it can reasonably be considered as part of the natural surroundings), and where there is a clear reason that could outweigh the re-use of the site - such as its contribution to nature conservation - or it has subsequently been put to an amenity use and cannot be regarded as requiring redevelopment⁵.

Net housing development

There is no commonly used definition of net housing density but advice is contained in *The Use of Density in Urban Planning* (see Annex D) paragraphs 8.19 - 8.27.

¹ In other words, the urban land uses as defined by the DETR's Land-Use Change Statistics (excluding 'urban land not previously developed'). See Annex B of *Land Use Change in England No 14* which is available at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_607174.hcsp

² The curtilage is defined as the area of land attached to a building. All of the land within the curtilage of the site (as defined above) will also be defined as previously-developed.

However, this does not mean that the whole area of the curtilage should therefore be redeveloped. For example, where the footprint of a building only occupies a proportion of a site of which the remainder is open land (such as at an airfield or a hospital) the whole site should not normally be developed to the boundary of the curtilage. The local planning authority should make a judgement about site layout in this context, bearing in mind other planning considerations, such as policies for the protection of open space and playing fields or development in the countryside, how the site relates to the surrounding area, and requirements for on-site open space, buffer strips, landscaped areas, etc.

³ These land uses are in addition to the Land-Use Change Statistics 'urban' groups.

⁴ This relates to minerals and waste sites which are to remain unrestored after use because the planning permission allowing them did not include a restoration condition. All other such sites will be restored to 'greenfield' status, by virtue of the planning condition.

⁵ The definition does not supersede or in any way change the policy in respect of the redevelopment of major developed sites in the Green Belt set out in Annex C to Planning Policy Guidance note 2: *Green Belts*.

For the purposes of PPG3, local authorities should adopt the approach to "net site density" set out in that document. Paragraphs 8.19 - 8.22 states:

8.19 A "net site density" is a more refined estimate than a gross site density and includes only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses. This will include:

- access roads within the site;
- private garden space;
- car parking areas;
- incidental open space and landscaping; and
- children's play areas where these are to be provided.

8.20 It therefore excludes:

- major distributor roads;
- primary schools;
- open spaces serving a wider area; and
- significant landscape buffer strips.

8.21 A net site density is the most commonly used approach in allocating housing land in development plans and is appropriate for development on infill sites where the boundaries of the site are clearly defined and where only residential uses are proposed. It is also appropriate where phased development is taking place in a major development area (perhaps spanning different plan periods) and individual housing sites have been identified.

8.22 Unlike gross, neighbourhood and town/district densities, the density assumption used does not need to reflect the inclusion of non-residential uses, but is solely based on the form of housing development envisaged.