

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM25

Replacement of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside

The replacement of an existing dwelling of permanent construction in the countryside with another dwelling will be supported providing that the following criteria are satisfied:

- a. The existing dwelling is not subject to a condition limiting the period of use as a dwelling;
- b. The replacement dwelling is located on the footprint of the existing building unless alternative siting has a positive benefit on the impact on the countryside or other environmental benefits can be demonstrated;
- c. The replacement dwelling is proportionate in size and scale to the existing dwelling, uses appropriate materials and sustainable technologies in accordance with policy SP7, and does not have an adverse impact on:
 - d. The character and local distinctiveness of the rural area;
 - e. Individual heritage assets and their settings;
 - f. Its setting within the wider landscape;
- g. There is no extension of the existing curtilage, unless it is necessary to provide additional parking or amenity space to be consistent with dwellings in the immediate vicinity;
- h. Where the existing dwelling forms part of an agricultural or other land based rural business and is an essential part of that business, the replacement dwelling must continue to perform the same function. An occupancy condition may be applied; and
- i. The impact on any protected species is assessed and appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are implemented to ensure any protected species are not adversely affected.

Supporting Text

11.58 Only proposals involving the replacement of existing permanent dwellings will be supported under policy DM26. The policy should not be used to establish a permanent residential use on a site where a property is derelict.

11.59 There is evidence within the National Landscape of small rural properties being purchased, then demolished and replaced with substantial new houses that are alien to the local context and the special qualities and natural beauty of the landscape of the National Landscape. Such development neither enhances nor conserves the character of the National Landscape and will be refused.

11.60 If a replacement dwelling is disproportionate to the existing dwelling it will not be accepted. The key components of proportionality are the scale, massing (volume), height, width, length, footprint (floorspace) of a development, and position within the plot (layout) and general context of the locality. Similarly to the consideration of extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside; there are no rules that can be applied as to the acceptable size of a replacement dwelling. Any size increase has to be considered on the basis of the impact of a particular property in a particular location.

11.61 The replacement of dwellings will be assessed on the basis of the impact of the new development relative to the existing property on the character and local distinctiveness of the rural area. This will include consideration of any new access arrangements. For a dwelling in the National Landscape and its setting, the prime consideration will be its impact on the special qualities and natural beauty of the landscape in accordance with policy SP2.

11.62 A replacement dwelling creates an opportunity to take positive action on climate change. Replacement dwellings which maximise the opportunities to enhance resilience to climate change in accordance with policies SP5 and SP7 are encouraged.