

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

### Policy DM26

#### Extension of Residential Curtilages in the Countryside

Extensions to existing residential curtilages in the countryside will only be supported where it can be shown that there is no adverse impact on the character and local distinctiveness of the rural area, the setting of the property within the wider landscape or encroachment on the rural area, public rights of way and on the amenity of local residents. Proposals will be supported where:

- a. It is required to provide parking in the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy DM44; and/or
- b. To realign a garden boundary or extend a garden to achieve a similar level of provision to other dwellings in the immediate area.

Applications should be accompanied by details which satisfactorily demonstrate the following:

- i. The boundary treatment of the extended curtilage is appropriate for the site and its rural surroundings;
- ii. All new hard surfacing, ground moulding or landscaping are in character with the surrounding area; and
- iii. The forming of any new entrances or gateways, complete with visibility splays, do not result in the significant loss of landscape features or harm the character of the rural highway. The integrity of banks, hedges, walls and roadside trees should be maintained.

### Supporting Text

**11.63** This policy will apply to any land that is proposed to be incorporated into ancillary residential use in the countryside. It is important to note that a curtilage is not a land use but is rather a description of land which is attached to a building. When determining what constitutes a residential curtilage the Council will consider the physical layout; ownership, both past and present; and its use or function, again both past and present.

**11.64** There are many reasons why an individual might wish to extend the curtilage of their property in the countryside. It could be to provide a larger garden, or provide off-street parking or garaging. Such changes even though minor in nature are not without potentially harmful effects. The inclusion of existing non-residential land used for agriculture, woodland or other rural uses can have a considerable visual impact on the local character of a rural area and the wider landscape, due to the urbanising effect of the change in use. Land previously used for agriculture or equestrian purposes has a different character to that of residential gardens, parking areas and garage spaces. The NPPF also recognises the importance of economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

**11.65** The way the boundaries are treated has an important impact. The protection of existing hedgerows contributes greatly to conserving and enhancing the local character of an area. This character can easily be lost if boundary hedgerows are removed. The erection of two metre high timber fences may be appropriate in some urban settings but, in a rural environment where many boundaries are marked out by simple post and rail fences or native hedgerows, they can stand out in the landscape and would not be considered acceptable when submitted as part of a planning application. Development proposals for the removal of existing hedgerows will be considered in accordance with policy DM15.