

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

Policy DM27

Sub-division of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside

The sub-division of an existing dwelling of permanent construction in the countryside into two or more residential units will be supported providing that the following criteria are satisfied:

- a. It is not subject to a condition restricting its use to ancillary accommodation;
- b. It is appropriate to the site, locality and surrounding area in terms of land use, design, size and scale;
- c. It would not require significant extensions, including alterations and outbuildings, which would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the original building or surrounding area;
- d. Any internal or external changes do not harm the significance of a heritage asset or its setting in accordance with policy SP9;
- e. The internal accommodation is adequate in terms of size and layout relative to the intensity of occupation envisaged and complies with residential space standards;
- f. It does not have an adverse impact on any neighbouring residential or other uses, including in terms of privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight and it should not have an overbearing effect in accordance with policy DM30;
- g. Following sub-division, sufficient space is available for vehicular access, car parking, amenity space and facilities for refuse storage on-site in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the site and the area;
- h. It does not involve the inappropriate sub-division of existing curtilages to a size below that prevailing in the area, taking account of the need to retain and enhance mature landscapes; and
- i. It does not have an adverse impact on the character and local distinctiveness of the rural area and its setting within the wider landscape.

Particular regard will also be had to the accessibility of the new development based around the site's location and its relationship to the settlement hierarchy set out in policy SP3, including its accessibility to shops, services and facilities.

Supporting Text

11.66 The sub-division of existing residential properties can improve sustainability by helping re-balance the housing stock, particularly in the countryside where there can be a shortage of smaller dwellings. Overall, whilst there is general policy of restraint in the countryside, it is recognised that sub-divisions can enable rural communities to be adaptable and more resilient to changing economic and demographic needs. In rural areas there are fewer properties available and this can make it difficult for residents to find suitable property in their local area to accommodate their changing needs. For example if they wish to downsize, and/or accommodate the needs of other family members, sub-division is an option that avoids them having to leave the local community and its social support network.

11.67 For the purposes of applying the policy it cannot be presumed that all dwellings will be suitable for sub-division. It is important that all dwellings created through the sub-division of an existing dwelling should provide adequate accommodation, and not compromise living standards especially where smaller units are provided. Successful sub-divisions depend on having a clear understanding of the capacity of the dwelling for change and the standard of accommodation that can be created. In this context, residential annexes permitted under policy DM29 are not regarded as suitable for sub-division as independent planning units.

11.68 It is also important that changes are capable of being accommodated into the existing landscape, without undermining or having an adverse impact on the rural character of the area, either individually or cumulatively. This will include consideration of any new access arrangements. New separate gardens with the potential for the introduction of domestic paraphernalia can also have a considerable visual impact on the local character of a rural area. In considering proposals in or within the setting of the National Landscape particular regard will be had to the impact on its special qualities and natural beauty.

11.69 When considering accessible locations, significant intensification of residential uses through the creation of a large number of dwelling units, either individually or cumulatively, will be avoided within areas which lack sufficient supporting infrastructure, facilities or services or where opportunities to access them by public transport, cycling and walking are limited.