

BE4 New build live/work units

New build live/work units will be permitted inside the housing development boundaries of the local service centres and service villages in Table 1 and within some of the allocated business sites in accordance with Appendix 3.

New build live/work units will also be permitted on the site of a former industrial use, if continued employment use is no longer suitable or the site has been vacant for 3 years, and the site is otherwise capable of supporting a residential use. Proposals outside housing development boundaries will need to be supported by evidence of need for a business unit with ancillary living accommodation and evidence that such a unit would be viable. In the case of a proposed new business, this evidence should include a business plan.

Proposals for live/work development will also need to meet the following criteria:

- a) The residential use will be ancillary to the business use;
- b) The occupancy of the living area will be restricted to a person working full-time in the business.

If located within an area of housing, only uses compatible with residential amenity will be permitted.

Aim

3.21 To encourage new forms of purpose-designed live/work units that allow existing businesses to expand and attract new businesses.

Justification

3.22 The proportion of people who work from home is already high in the National Park. This is largely because of the predominance of agriculture and small tourism providers. More recently home internet connections have enabled people in other business sectors to work at least some of their time from home. This form of employment offers scope for sustainable growth, if high-speed broadband can reliably reach more areas of the National Park (see Policy C11).

3.23 Working from home reduces commuting and supports local services. Planning permission is not normally needed to convert a room to a home office or craft workshop, as long as the use remains subordinate to the main use as a dwelling. Where planning permission is required for an extension, an ancillary building or an intensification of the employment use, then the Authority will be supportive, subject to safeguarding neighbouring residential amenity and mitigating any other harmful impacts. Where the employment use would grow to a level of activity that would exceed the capacity of a residential area, road network or environment to contain it, then the Authority will encourage relocation to a more appropriate employment site.

3.24 The development of new bespoke buildings for shared residential/business use is a potential opportunity that could fit well into the National Park context. It could be used to promote the National Park as a place to live and work by solving the problem of having to find two separate properties at the same time. It could attract new, low-impact, high-quality and skilled jobs, develop stronger business networks and entrepreneurship, support construction of new local occupancy housing, support existing services and reduce carbon emissions from commuting and modern energy-saving technologies. There is a wide range of low impact uses that would be compatible in the deeply rural context of the National Park. These would include workshops, light manufacturing, food processing, professional services, packaging, journalism, music production, internet sales etc.

3.25 Experience of live/work in the National Park suggests that the policy is more likely to be successful when targeted at purpose-designed, new-build premises that do not look like conventional houses and are located within existing or allocated business sites. The Design Guide contains supplementary advice for live/work proposals.

3.26 In the National Park, where a high proportion of housing is occupied by people who have retired to the area or is used as second homes, there is a risk that live/work schemes could lose their work element over time. To try to ensure live/work units achieve their objective of a sustainable mixed use and to avoid them becoming residential only, a number of criteria will be included in a Section 106 legal agreement. This will require the residential use to be secondary to the main business use. The residential part will be required to be occupied after the implementation of the business, in order to avoid invalidating the permission. Sole residential use will only be permitted in the event of retirement or business failure and then only after a period of 5 years business use. The use will then revert to live/work again on re-occupancy. To confirm that the business use is continuing the legal agreement will require the occupier to submit annual approved business accounts to the Authority.

3.27 In considering the detailed design and layout of a new live/work building developers will be required to demonstrate a functional separation between the domestic space and the work area, unless this would prejudice the viability of the employment use proposed.

3.28 The conversion of traditional buildings to live work uses is dealt with by Policy L2.