

How to use the Inspector Training Manual

The Inspector Training Manual provides practical advice to new Inspectors and serves as a source of continuing professional development for existing Inspectors.

This training material does not constitute Government policy or guidance; nor does it seek to interpret Government policy. In addressing policy issues, you will be expected to have regard to the most up-to-date policy and guidance produced by the relevant Government department. In the event that there appears to be a discrepancy between this material and national policy / guidance, any national policy and guidance will be conclusive.

The Inspector Training Manual is made up of 'living documents'. Please always ensure that you are referring to the most up-to-date version.

5. The Framework makes clear in [paragraph 55](#) that new, isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. The word 'isolated' is not defined in the NPPF.
6. In *Braintree District Council v SSCLG & Ors* [2017] EWHC 2743 (Admin)¹ the judge found "isolated" should be given its ordinary objective meaning of "far away from other places, buildings or people; remote" (Oxford Concise English Dictionary)². She also found "*The immediate context is the distinction in NPPF 55 between "rural communities", "settlements" and "villages" on the one hand, and "the countryside" on the other. This suggests that "isolated homes in the countryside" are not in communities and settlements and so the distinction between the two is primarily spatial/physical.*"³

7. [At the Court of Appeal](#)⁴, Lord Justice Lindblom held that:

"31. ... in its particular context in paragraph 55 of the NPPF, the word 'isolated' in the phrase 'isolated homes in the countryside' simply connotes a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a settlement..."

"32. What constitutes a settlement for these purposes is also left undefined in the NPPF. The NPPF contains no definitions of a "community", a "settlement", or a "village". There is no specified minimum number of dwellings, or population. It is not said that a settlement or development boundary must have been fixed in an

¹ The Council had refused permission for two bungalows in the village on the grounds that they were outside a defined settlement boundary in the plan. The Inspector had concluded that, since the proposed new homes would be located on a road in a village where there were a number of dwellings nearby, the proposed development would not result in "new isolated homes in the countryside."

² Paragraph 24 of the judgment.

³ Paragraph 25 of the judgment.

⁴ *Braintree DC v SSCLG, Greyread Ltd & Granville Developments Ltd* [2017] EWHC 2743 (Admin); [2018] EWCA Civ 610

adopted or emerging local plan, or that only the land and buildings within that settlement or development boundary will constitute the settlement. In my view a settlement would not necessarily exclude a hamlet or a cluster of dwellings, without, for example, a shop or post office of its own, or a school or community hall or a public house nearby, or public transport within easy reach. Whether, in a particular case, a group of dwellings constitutes a settlement, or a "village", for the purposes of the policy will again be a matter of fact and planning judgment for the decision-maker. In the second sentence of paragraph 55 the policy acknowledges that development in one village may "support services" in another. It does not stipulate that, to be a "village", a settlement must have any "services" of its own, let alone "services" of any specified kind."

8. Consequently, whether a site for proposed new dwellings is considered 'isolated' or not, will be a matter of fact and planning judgment depending on the particular circumstances of the case before you.