

**Report To: Planning Committee**

**Date of Meeting: 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014**

**Lead Member / Officer: Cllr David Smith, Public Realm  
Angela Loftus, Planning & Public Protection Policy  
Manager**

**Report Author: Lara Griffiths, Planning Officer**

**Title: Conversion of Rural Buildings Supplementary Planning Guidance –  
Consultation draft**

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**1. What is the report about?**

1.1. This report accompanies a draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document on conversion of rural buildings which, if adopted, will be used in the determination of planning applications.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1. Following the adoption of the Denbighshire Local Development Plan (LDP), an updated SPG on conversion of rural buildings is required in order to provide further guidance for developers, Officers and Members. A draft SPG for public consultation is attached to this report.

**3. What are the recommendations?**

3.1. That Members agree the draft SPG on conversion of rural buildings as a basis for public consultation.

**4. Report details**

4.1. Following the adoption of the LDP on 4th June 2013, Council agreed to carry forward the existing series of SPGs, including SPG 16 – Conversion of Rural Buildings. However, given the significant differences between the previous Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and LDP policies relating to conversion of rural buildings, the introduction of the requirement for affordable housing, and the need for further guidance, it is necessary to produce an updated SPG on this topic. When adopted, the SPG will be a material planning consideration when assessing planning applications.

4.2. The SPG supplements the LDP policies on conversion of buildings from agricultural, commercial or community uses (mainly policies PSE 4, PSE 10 and BSC 12) by providing further detail on what uses may be acceptable for converted buildings, details of the marketing tests required and design guidance.

4.3. The public consultation period would be a minimum of 8 weeks and is anticipated to start in the last week of January 2014. All City, Town and Community Councils will be consulted along with people registered on the LDP database. Hard copies of documents will be available in all libraries and one stop shops as well as on the Denbigshire web site. The results of the consultation will be reported back to Planning Committee with a final SPG for adoption.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

5.1. *Corporate Priorities 2012-17.* The SPG will contribute positively to the following proposed corporate priority:

- Developing the local economy – Providing further guidance on the LDP policy requirements will significantly contribute towards securing and delivering rural employment opportunities throughout the County.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

6.1. Agreeing the SPG for consultation is not anticipated to create any additional cost.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

7.1 An EqIA is not considered necessary for this decision. The principle of converting rural buildings has been established through adoption of the LDP. The SPG provides further guidance on this. The LDP underwent a full EqIA in May 2011.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

8.1 No formal consultation has been carried out, but internal consultation has been carried out with the LDP Members Steering Group, officers in the Development Control Section, County Conservation Officer, County Ecologist and Corporate Equalities Officer and amendments made. The Members Steering Group raised some concerns regarding the LDP policy which restricts conversions to employment, commercial or community uses or on failing to secure such a use affordable housing to meet local needs. The SPG does not provide an opportunity to change this policy and following a benchmarking exercise against other north Wales councils with up to date, adopted development plans it is clear that this policy is consistent with all of these north Wales authorities (Flintshire, Conwy, Gwynedd and Snowdonia). Concern was also raised that the 12 month marketing test was too long, it is again confirmed that this is consistent with other north Wales authorities who have published guidance on this. I would suggest that the 12 month test remains in the consultation draft of the SPG with the opportunity to amend if necessary following the results of the consultation exercise.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 Any costs associated with the guidance should be contained within existing budgets and therefore there are no obvious financial implications contained in the report.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 In the absence of up-to-date guidance there is a risk the Council will be unable to effectively operate the LDP policy. This would result in a failure to secure employment, commercial or community uses for rural buildings or additional affordable housing in rural areas. The current conversion of rural buildings SPG relates to the previous UDP policy, which is significantly different to the LDP policy, and therefore cannot be relied upon to provide sufficient planning guidance in the long-term. The adoption of a new conversions of rural buildings SPG has been identified as a priority by the LDP Members Steering Group.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

11.1 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).

