

Report To: Planning Committee

Date of Meeting: 13th May 2015

Lead Member / Officer: Cllr David Smith / Angela Loftus

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Title: Re-use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings Supplementary Planning Guidance – Adoption

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 This report summarises responses from the consultation on the draft SPG Re-use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings and recommends adoption with modifications enabling the guidance to 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 re-use and adaptation of rural buildings is required in order to provide further guidance for developers, Officers and Members. A final copy of the SPG is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. What are the recommendations?

- 3.1. That Members adopt the final SPG on Re-use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings as amended, for use in the determination of planning applications.

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 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.

- 4.4 The SPG was subject to public consultation for 8 weeks between 3rd March and 28th April 2014. A consultation report detailing the results of the consultation and responses received is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 4.5 The key issues arising from the consultation were:
- Concerns over viability of converting for any uses other than market housing.
 - General support from many for 12 month marketing period, one felt it should be longer, one shorter.
 - Extra reference should be made to sensitive landscape and archaeological areas.
 - Agreement that extensions should be subordinate to original buildings.
- 4.6 A number of changes are proposed to the SPG in response to the comments received and these are shown in the version attached as Appendix 1. Deleted text is shown as a strike-through and new text is highlighted.
- 4.7 In response to Members' concerns about affordable housing, an Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group was established to look at a variety of issues relating to affordable housing. This included the affordable housing restriction in relation to conversions and the Group has recommended that planning policies should be changed to allow for the conversion of rural buildings to market housing. This would be a change in policy from the stance in the adopted LDP and this policy will require amendment on review. There is currently no mechanism to amend policies in the LDP other than through a full review of the entire plan. Welsh Government is considering an amendment to allow partial plan reviews but this has not been confirmed to date. As an interim arrangement, it is proposed to amend the SPG to allow for the conversion of rural buildings for market housing if it can be demonstrated that the building has been marketed for economic use, without success and that conversion for affordable housing would not be viable.
- 4.8 The LDP Members Steering Group have discussed the consultation responses received and were supportive of the changes proposed. Both the LDP Steering Group and relevant Lead Members requested that the revised SPG should be reported to Planning Committee at the earliest opportunity to enable the revised SPG to be adopted and the amended guidance on the re-use of rural buildings applied as soon as possible.
- 4.9 In summary, the key changes proposed are:
- To allow for conversion to market housing provided that it can be demonstrated that the building has been marketed for economic use (without success) and that conversion to affordable housing would not be viable.
 - Amendments to the guidance relating to the existing structure and removal of the requirement to undertake a structural survey
 - Clarification that the Council would consider conversion to holiday accommodation to be an economic use.

- Addition of a requirement to undertake web-based marketing as part of the marketing exercise for business use.
- Clarification that any extensions required should be subordinate to the original building.

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.
- Ensuring access to good quality housing – Adopting the amended guidance will enable the provision of additional affordable and market housing in the rural area.

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

6.1. Adopting the SPG 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 Internal consultation has been carried out with the LDP Members Steering Group, relevant Lead Members, officers in the Development Management Section, County Conservation Officer and County Ecologist and amendments made. The LDP Members Steering Group have discussed the consultation responses received at their meeting on 23rd April 2015 and were supportive of the changes proposed.

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 and market 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 conversion 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).