

GWYNEDD AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

A SUMMARY OF THE GWYNEDD COUNCIL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

Background

The purpose of the Gwynedd Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance is to provide detailed guidance to users of the planning system on how the current policies on affordable housing will be applied. The Supplementary Planning Guidance only to the Gwynedd Council Planning Authority area and does not apply in the Snowdonia National Park Authority area.

What is Affordability and Affordable Housing?

It is important to differentiate between affordability and affordable housing. The term 'affordable housing' is used to describe certain properties that are available at a cost below open market levels, either for sale or rent, to select categories of people. 'Affordability' determines whether people have the ability (financial resources) to satisfy their housing requirements by buying or renting on the open market without subsidy.

What is the definition of Affordable Housing?

Affordable housing is provided to meet the needs of households whose incomes are insufficient to allow them to access housing suitable for their needs (to buy or rent) on the open market.

In order to be considered as 'affordable housing' a development must satisfy the needs of one of the following categories:

- **Housing available to be rented** usually from a Registered Social Landlord, or from a private developer on terms similar to social housing.
- **Housing for part ownership** with Registered Social Landlords (Low Cost Home Ownership), or the Council, or private developers.
- **Housing available for purchase at an affordable price**, considering local incomes, house prices and interest rates (Discounted Low Cost Marketing Housing).

What is the definition of Affordability?

The affordability of any particular household will depend on the relationship between the amount that the household is able to afford, and, the cost of appropriate local housing.

Affordability in Relation to housing developed with Welsh Assembly Government Social Housing Grant (Acceptable Cost Guidance (ACG) levels and affordability)

The price of all affordable housing units developed with Welsh Assembly Government Social Housing Grant (e.g. Social Rented Housing and the Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes administered by Registered Social Landlords) must be sold to initial or subsequent purchasers at a price not exceeding the prevailing Welsh Assembly Government's Acceptable Cost Guidance (ACG) level for the type and size of housing in question.

Affordable in Relation to Discounted Low Cost Market Housing

These are properties which are sold at a defined discount (percentage) below normal market value which enables them to be purchased by people who would otherwise be unable to buy on the open market. House types should reflect the local housing need, and not just be smaller cheaper houses or flats. Section 106 Planning Obligations will be imposed to ensure that in the event of the first occupier selling the property, the benefits of the low cost provision are passed on to subsequent occupiers.

What are the categories of Local Need?

There will be a requirement to prove that all those persons for whom the affordable dwellings are provided for **ARE IN GENUINE NEED OF AN AFFORDABLE DWELLING AND FALL WITHIN THE DEFINITION OF "LOCAL"**. The ability to prove one of these is not sufficient justification in itself.

The Council will ensure, through use of legal agreements, that the benefits of affordable housing will be available for those residents who have lived or worked in the Community Council area, or in the adjacent Community Council area, for five years or more and whose incomes are too low to enable them to buy or rent on the open market. The Council will normally expect that initial and subsequent occupiers belong to one of the following categories:

- (1) People who have lived or worked in the Community Council area, or in the adjacent Community Council area, for five years or more and who need to set up households for the first time;
- (2) People who have lived or worked in the Community Council area, or in the adjacent Community Council area, for five years or more and who live in a dwelling which, in the Council's opinion, is unfit for habitation and cannot be renovated at reasonable cost;
- (3) Disabled or elderly people who have lived or worked in the Community Council area, or in the adjacent Community Council area, for five years or more and who require accommodation more suitable for their needs;
- (4) People who vacated tied accommodation and who have lived or worked in the Community Council area, or in the adjacent Community Council area, for five years or more;
- (5) Persons who provide important work or services in the Community Council area, or in the adjacent Community Council area, and have a genuine need to live closer to the local community.

Persons who own or have control over residential property which could reasonably meet their needs will not be considered to have a local need.

Where can affordable housing be developed through the Affordable Housing Policies currently in operation in the Gwynedd Council Planning Authority area?

Policies have been included in the current adopted Development Plans for the Gwynedd Council Planning Authority area so to facilitate the provision of affordable housing for local need on certain types of sites; these sites being:

a) New dwellings within the development boundary of settlements

Affordable housing will be sought on sites within the development boundaries of various types of settlements. Sites include some of those specifically designated for housing, undesignated sites, or windfall sites (sites that become unexpectedly available for housing developments). All developments must be in accordance with the requirements of the relevant policies contained in the currently adopted Development Plans.

b) Rural Exception Sites

In addition and in exceptional cases current Development Plans allow for permission to be granted on land that immediately adjoin the defined development boundaries of certain types of settlements, in order to provide for affordable housing need in local communities. These are called “exception sites”.

Development Plans cannot designate such sites and proposals will be assessed on the basis of proven need, the suitability of the site, local requirements and affordability. It must be possible to develop a selected site in a way that contributes positively to the area and in a way that has no detrimental effect on the area and it must also be affordable. The density, setting, design, materials, landscaping etc must protect and maintain the existing character of the village or area.

The Upgrading of Existing Dwellings and the Conversion of Buildings for Residential use can also contribute to the housing stock

The upgrading of existing dwellings and the conversion of buildings for residential use can also contribute to the housing stock. The conversion of buildings into dwellings within the development boundary can reduce the pressure to release green field sites and in general such conversions are considered favourably.

What are the methods of providing/developing affordable housing?

Registered Social Landlords, Community Land Trusts, private developers in addition to individual people (including those wishing to ‘self build’, builders or land owners) can develop affordable housing subject to their proposals conforming to current affordable housing policies in addition to conforming to the Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance and all of its appendices.

Why will Occupancy Control Measures be used?

It is important to ensure that where affordable housing is provided, it remains affordable for subsequent purchaser and occupiers. Furthermore in the case of dwellings in private ownership, it will need to be ensured that the dwelling will always be used as the principal residence of a person in need of an affordable dwelling who conforms to the definition of local.

What are the key principles for the design of affordable housing?

Design and Quality Standards

The type, size and design of the house will affect its ‘affordability’ for the first occupant and subsequent occupants. The Council will ensure that any proposal for affordable housing is of an appropriate size which will meet an identified local need. It will also be necessary to consider the relation between the size of the plot and the size of the property/number of houses to be developed etc. so that this also reflects the affordability of the property.

Gwynedd Council will not discriminate between open market housing and affordable housing when applying design considerations.

All development should be undertaken in accordance with the Gwynedd Council Design Guide (April 2003) and the Gwynedd Council Affordable Housing Design Guide (April 2005).

Layout and Distribution

In order to help create mixed and balanced communities the Council seeks to ensure a mix of size, type and affordability in new housing developments. This should include both a mix of types and sizes of market dwellings such as flats and terraced houses for smaller households and larger family accommodation, as well as affordable housing to meet a range of local needs.

The Council considers that on sites where affordable housing is provided this can only be achieved where the affordable housing is integrated into the design and layout of the site.

With the exception of affordable housing provided as flats, the Council expects the affordable housing to be dispersed across the site rather than being grouped together in part of the site.

Acceptable Size

The size of dwellings must not be excessive in relation to the size of the property required to meet the target's need (or it may not be affordable to other people).

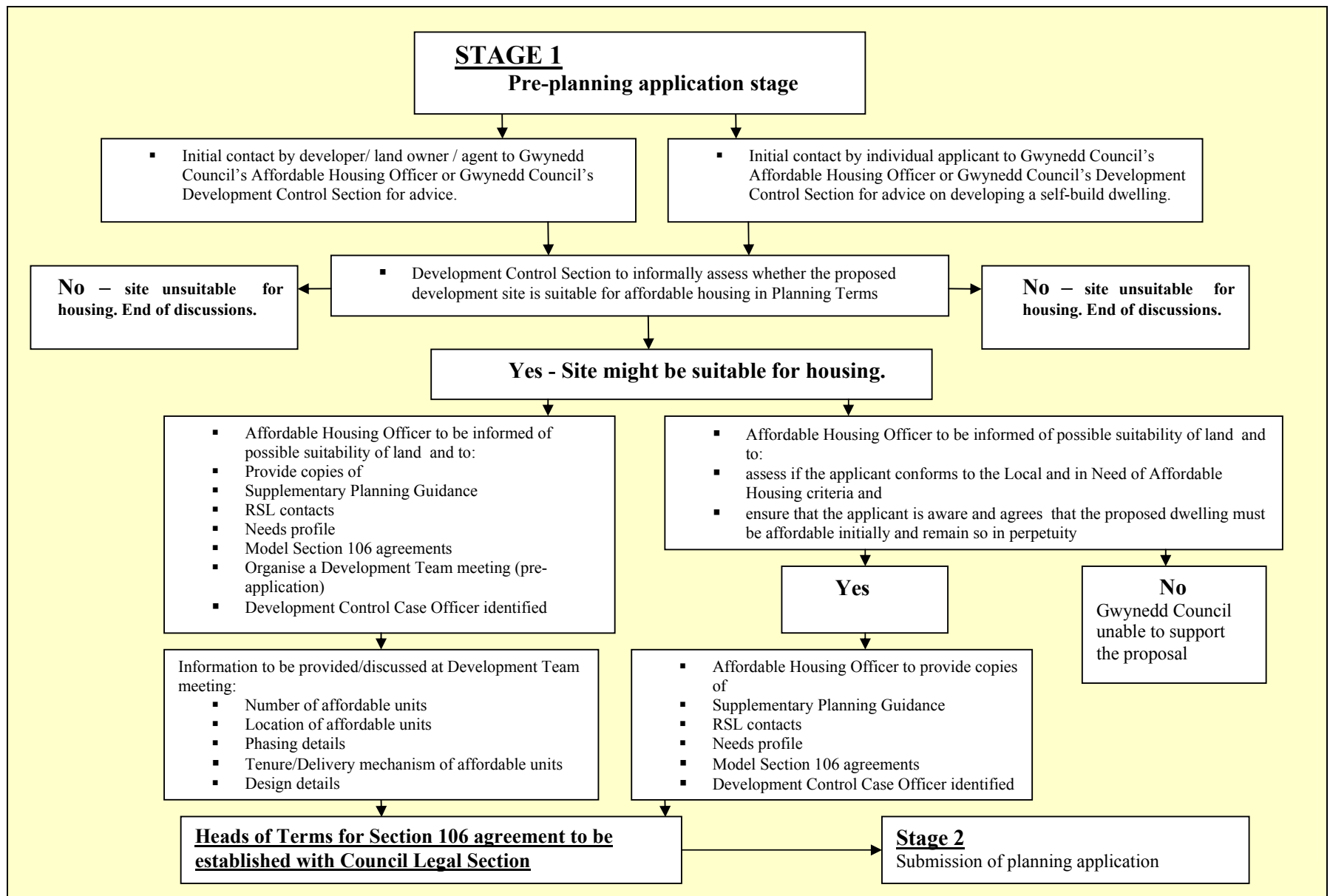
How to obtain further information?

A copy of the Supplementary Planning Guidance and any further information can be obtained by contacting the Gwynedd Council Affordable Housing Officer. Contact details are as follows:

Affordable Housing Officer
Environment Directorate
Gwynedd Council
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

01286 679 498

Email taifforddiadwy@gwynedd.gov.uk



Flow Chart Mapping Out the Process in Relation to How to Approach a Planning Application for the Provision of Affordable Housing

