

# Supplementary Planning Guidance: Landscape Character



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement Regarding Consultation**

1. The draft version of this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was subject to public consultation between 19 March 2009 and 24 April 2009. A public notice was published in the Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald and the Cambrian News on 19 March 2009 in order to raise awareness about the public consultation. Copies of the SPG were available to view in the main Council offices, in the public libraries and on the Council's website during the consultation period. Comments were invited from numerous individuals and organisations, which included community councils and local builders and their representatives. A summary of the representations that were received and the response to them can be seen in a document entitled "Consultation statement - December 2009".
2. The representations and the response to them were scrutinised by the Environment Committee on 11 June 2009. The SPG was adopted in the Council Board meeting on 24 November 2009.

### **The Purpose of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

3. This SPG is one of a series of guidance notes which support the policies of the adopted Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP was adopted on 16 July 2009. Although decisions on planning applications will be based on the UDP's policies (as indicated in part 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), the content of the SPG is a material planning consideration. This guidance forms a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications which could affect the form, appearance and setting of the built and natural landscape and its features. The main purpose of this SPG is to assist in the interpretation and application of national and local policies concerned with the protection and enhancement of landscape character and in doing so it will provide detailed guidance to members of the public, developers, planning officers and the Council's planning committees on planning issues relating to the landscape.
4. This SPG will:
  - Explain the methodology used to inform this guidance;
  - Provide an overview of the various elements that contribute to the character of the landscape in the Gwynedd UDP Area;
  - Introduce the relevant planning policy context in relation to landscape;
  - Explain the methodology used to assess and determine different landscape character areas in the Plan Area;
  - Identify specific characteristics unique to each individual landscape character area, and;
  - Provide clear guidance for developers and planning officers relating to each landscape character area.

### **What is Landscape?**

5. Landscape is the physical reality of the environment around us, the tangible elements that give shape and diversity to our surroundings. Landscape is also the environment perceived, predominantly visually but additionally through our

senses of smell, touch and hearing. Our appreciation of landscape is also affected, by our cultural backgrounds, and by personal and professional interests.

6. The European Landscape Convention's definition of landscape is short, yet comprehensive: *'landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'*. Landscape is a meeting ground between past, present and future as well as between natural and cultural influences. It has both a physical and an emotional presence and sets a context for people lives. Future landscapes will continue to be influenced by changes in climate, agriculture, housing and development needs, and by progress towards a low carbon society.
7. Development occurs in a landscape setting, but may also alter the landscape by changing its elements and features. This potentially significant impact necessitates management through the planning system. An important part of this management process is the encouragement of early consideration of landscape in the location and design of development proposals. This guidance has been produced in order to facilitate such consideration.
8. Assessing landscape character is a useful tool that ensures that development and change in the future does not undermine characteristic values of the landscape.

#### **What is landscape character?**

9. Landscape character relates to the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct and gives each its particular sense of place.
10. Understanding the landscape character of any area requires systematic investigation of the many different factors that have helped to create and influence that location e.g. geology, landform, natural attributes and influences of human land use and settlement.
11. Assessing the character of the landscape is the process of dividing the landscape into 'areas' of distinct, recognisable and consistent common character.
12. This guidance will contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the distinctiveness and diversity of landscapes across the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority Area.

#### **OVERVIEW OF THE GWYNEDD LANDSCAPE**

13. Gwynedd boasts some of the most spectacular landscapes throughout the whole of the UK and has evolved over thousands of years. It has been created by the interaction of the natural environment and human activities, in particular the combination of physical, biological and cultural influences.
14. Indeed, the natural environment of Gwynedd is regarded at a national and international level as an environment of the highest quality. It is a unique environment and varies considerably throughout the UDP Area.

15. There are a myriad of habitats throughout the landscape reflecting the coastal character and agricultural land use, and a number of these are of national value and importance.
16. Gwynedd's natural environment is recognised as being of a very high quality. The underlying quality of the Gwynedd landscape is reflected in the number of landscape, ecological and historical designations relating to the area.
17. The Gwynedd Local Planning Authority Area has an existing framework of designations and policy relating to the environment all of which has an influence on the landscape in its entirety. Designations and policies have a hierarchy from International to National, Regional, and local. The area has a similar covering of policies and designations for nature conservation, geology, and the built heritage/archaeological sites all of which contribute to the quality of the landscape.

## **PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND**

18. This SPG is based on national policy guidance, contained within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (2002); Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design; and local policy as set out within the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan.

### **National Policy Guidance**

19. The broad implications of PPW for LPAs are that a holistic approach to landscape conservation should be taken, extending concern beyond the boundaries of statutorily designated sites. PPW notes that attention to landscape issues is a key part of planning for sustainability.
20. Where development does occur it is important to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to safeguard or enhance the environmental quality of land (para 5.5.1). PPW encourages pre-application discussions between developers, local planning authorities and statutory advisors such as CCW and the Environment Agency.
21. Based on the contents of PPW, landscape considerations should include:
  - Does the proposal contribute to **maintain local features** such as **green wedges** and **open spaces** of an area?
  - Does the development contribute to the **conservation** and **enhancement** of the landscape in areas which may not be statutorily designated sites, that are particularly highly valued locally which may include Landscape Conservation Areas, landscapes on the Register of Landscapes, parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales or alternatively may have purely local importance and may not otherwise be afforded protection?
  - Does the proposal make a positive contribution to **environmental protection** and **improvement** for example to biodiversity, air quality and the protection of water resources?
  - Does the proposal contribute to the **reinforcement of traditional and local distinctiveness** in areas recognised for their landscape, townscape and historic value?

Importance of Design Considerations

22. Design and landscape are inextricably linked with each other. Indeed, design issues can have major implications in terms of landscape character. PPW supports this notion, stating that the impact of development on the existing character, the scale and siting of new development, and the use of appropriate building materials will be particularly important to a landscape of a particular area (para 2.9.7).
23. Technical Advice Note 12 focuses on design issues within a planning context and outlines important considerations which should be taken into account in terms of landscape **conservation** and **enhancement**. It states that *“the distinctive settlement patterns which characterise much of Wales have evolved in part in response to the country’s diverse landscape and topography. The way in which development relates to its urban or rural landscape context is critical to its success and because of this an understanding of landscape quality is fundamental to the design process.”* (para 5.5.1).
24. Other points outlined in TAN12: Design, which should be considered include:
- The way in which development relates to its urban or rural landscape context is critical to its success and because of this, an understanding of landscape quality is fundamental to the design process.
  - For larger developments, undertaking strategic landscape assessment at the outset of the design process should help to define the capacity of the natural environment to absorb development. Detailed site appraisal may provide information on hydrology, microclimate, soils, plant communities, historic features and all visual qualities including views and vistas.
  - Design solutions should clearly demonstrate how the strategic landscape assessment and site appraisal have informed the detailed design of development and planting proposals.
  - Landscape elements in towns are closely related to topography and the landscape qualities of any settlement including its contribution to views and links to the open countryside need to be taken into consideration early in the design process.
  - The aim should be to be to achieve sustainable design solutions which maximise the natural landscape assets and minimise environmental impact on the landscape

Local Policy Context

25. The Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan includes a range of policies concerned with the conservation and enhancement of landscapes across the Authority area.
26. In respect of the landscape, and in line with national policy guidelines, the Council’s overall objective is to **maintain** and **enhance** the quality and distinctiveness and amenity of the landscape areas. The key policies of relevance in the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan are as follows (full versions of the policies can be seen in appendix 2):

### **Policy B10 - Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Conservation Areas**

27. Policy B10 states that proposals for development in Landscape Conservation Areas will be assessed against the following criteria:

- a) the impact of the proposed development on the positive features in the landscape and those elements of it that contribute to the distinctive character of the local landscape;
- b) The proposed location, design and materials of the proposed development and its ability to integrate with the landscape;
- c) The economic and social benefits of the proposed development in relation to points a) and b) above.

Landscape Conservation Areas are shown on the proposals maps in the Gwynedd UDP.

### **Policy B11 – Open Spaces Between or in Villages or Towns**

28. Policy B11 ensures that proposals that will cause significant harm to the role or importance of open spaces between or in villages or towns will be refused. The LPA will consider the following factors to assess the impact of a proposed development on the role or importance of a designated open space:

- a) the effect of the development on the character of the built environment;
- b) the effect of the development on the local landscape;
- c) the need for the development to be located there;
- d) the impact of the development on the ecological, geological or archaeological value of the site;
- e) the impact of the development on the amenities of local residents.

### **Policy B12 – Protecting Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens**

29. Policy B12 ensures that proposals that are within or on sites visible from a park and garden identified and described in Part 1 of the Register of Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Interest in Wales will be refused if they cause significant harm to their character, appearance or setting. The policy also provides the framework for the protection of historic landscapes identified in Part 2 of the same Register. Those identified to be protected in the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan Area are listed in the UDP's written statement and shown on the UDP's proposals map, and information about their qualities is found in the register of which the Council has a copy. Additionally, during the past few years, the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been involved in work examining the historic character of areas defined by the Register of Historic Landscapes in Wales. This is part of an ongoing pan-Wales project sponsored by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, the Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS UK and it outlines the key historic characteristics of the area along with recommendations for their positive management.

**Policy B14: Protecting the Landscape Character of Snowdonia National Park**

30. Policy B14 ensures that development and land use changes will not be permitted where these would adversely affect the qualities and special character of the Snowdonia National Park by either causing significant visual intrusion, and/or being insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape. The aim of the policy is to ensure that the land around the Park is safeguarded from unsuitable or unsightly developments. It is crucial to ensure that no new developments damage the National Park's visual amenities or landscape. Any development permitted near the Park's boundary or on sites that are visible from public vantage points within it will be required to complement the landscape and must be designed and located so as to be beneficial to the area's appearance.

**Policy B27: Landscaping Schemes**

31. Policy B27 aims to provide a high quality landscape appropriate to the site and locality. It ensures that proposals will be approved provided that high quality soft/hard landscaping appropriate to the site and the locality is provided and that wherever possible features that are part of the landscape such as trees, hedges and watercourses that are part of the landscape are safeguarded and enhanced. In 2001, the Council published a series of guidance notes including The Landscape Working for Gwynedd 2001 which is based on the results of the LANDMAP assessment. This has now been updated to reflect new information (2008). The assessment identified 16 Landscape Character Areas (LCA). Each LCA has its own distinctive landscape. Paragraphs 46 to 53 of this document explain the planning implications of these LCAs in a planning context in more detail.

**Policy B22 - Building Design**

32. Policy B22 requires development proposals to conform with the following criteria:
- a) that the proposal respects the site and its surroundings in terms of its scale, size, form, density, location, layout, symmetry, quality and suitability of materials, aspect, microclimate and density of building/land use and the space around and between buildings
  - b) that it does not have an unacceptable detrimental effect on the form and character of the surrounding landscape or townscape, or on the local natural or historical environment;
  - c) that it does not have an unacceptable detrimental effect on prominent public views into, out of or across centres, villages, rural villages or open countryside.
33. In specific cases described in the Policy, applicants will be required to submit a Design Statement with their application. Prospective developers are encouraged to discuss whether a design statement is required and the requirements of the Statements with planning officers before submitting a planning application.
34. In relevant circumstances, applicants should make a specific statement as to how landscape character opportunities have been responded to and threats minimised as part of a design statement. Statements might consider the following:

- i) Which landscape character area does the proposal fall within and more specifically, what is the landscape character of the site and its setting (see paragraphs 46-53 for more information)?
  - ii) How do the proposals take account of the character, condition and sensitivity of the landscape?
  - iii) What is the impact with respect to the defined characteristic features and elements and people's consequent sense of place?
  - iv) How significant is this impact in terms of the nature of the effects, their scale and duration, and people affected?
  - v) What secondary mitigation measures are proposed to offset the negative impacts of the proposals?
  - vi) How will the development contribute to the policy objectives of preventing unacceptable impacts on landscape and protecting (conserving, enhancing, reinforcing and/or creating) local landscape character?
35. It is important to remember that the Gwynedd UDP should be read as a whole when assessing planning applications and there may be further policies which may be indirectly relevant to the LPA's Landscape Character Areas (see paragraphs 46 – 53) that will be referred to by the Council when considering planning applications.
36. These policies may address issues such as nature conservation, habitats, trees, heritage and design and recreation which may influence the use of the landscape, and therefore affect its character.
37. The inclusion of landscape character policies in the Gwynedd UDP will help ensure decisions on the rural landscape are underpinned by a robust and widely accepted assessment of the landscape character.

#### **LANDMAP METHODOLOGY**

38. LANDMAP is an all-Wales GIS (Geographical Information System) based landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated into a nationally consistent data set. Gwynedd's LANDMAP study has been completed in conjunction with the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).
39. LANDMAP is a multi-aspect landscape assessment process which records information about the physical, ecological, visual, historic and cultural landscape in order to promote sustainable landscape decision-making. LANDMAP is comprised of five Evaluated Aspects (datasets of information) known as the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape. It enables these aspects to be identified and described to show what gives an area a sense of place, makes it distinct and different to another, and what type of changes and pressures the landscape might be sensitive to. Such information provides an understanding of the area's landscape and is designed to enable the management of change in the

landscape in an appropriate manner along with promoting sustainable landscape decision-making.

40. LANDMAP Information is collected in a structured and rigorous way that is defined by the LANDMAP Methodology. Only specialists within their respective fields may collect LANDMAP Information. The methodology for developing LANDMAP Information is the same for all five evaluated aspects. Specialists collect LANDMAP Information in a structured and rigorous way that is defined by the LANDMAP methodology (updated in 2008). Each evaluated aspect has its own detailed methodological chapter specifying the approach, the information to be collected and definitions of terms used to ensure consistency. Initially the study area (by definition a Planning Authority) is classified into different landscape types, which are defined as discrete geographical areas, these are known as aspect areas. This is done using the hierarchical classification system unique to each Evaluated Aspect.
41. Once the aspect areas are defined, survey records (known as Collector surveys) are completed for each identified aspect area. The Collector survey describes and documents the landscape character, qualities and features. Management recommendations are recorded for each aspect area, in addition to an evaluation of value. A technical report accompanies each evaluated aspect study area. The methodological approach and quality assurance standards set require that the information is robust, evidence based and is rigorously scrutinised at Quality Assurance. An important last stage in the process is the Quality Assurance Assessment to verify that the LANDMAP Information is of a consistent standard, accurate and of high quality.
42. The LANDMAP methodology is promoted in Planning Policy Wales (2002) (as amended). Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 2002 recognises that LANDMAP *“is an important information resource upon which local planning authorities can draw in making landscape assessments needed to inform local policy, guidance and decision making in this field”* (para 5.3.13). PPW (2002) also states that *“LANDMAP assessments can help inform supplementary planning guidance on landscape assessment.”* (para 5.3.13).
43. This is supported by Technical Advice Note 12 on Design which also states that LANDMAP *“has the potential to provide a framework and information base from which good design and management can be developed. It could also have a role in the preparation of design guidance and SPG for development in rural areas and larger scale developments.”* (para 5.15).
44. This document fulfils that requirement by linking the local LANDMAP study to the planning process, highlighting its importance as a key reference in the interpretation of planning policies and the assessment of planning applications. LANDMAP information can be accessed through the CCW website at [www.ccw.gov.uk/landmap](http://www.ccw.gov.uk/landmap)
45. The LANDMAP methodology has enabled the identification of distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), which are referred to in the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan and are shown in Appendix 1 to the Plan. As a result of the LANDMAP process, it has been possible to identify the ‘special qualities’ of the Gwynedd Plan area, particularly as expressed through the identification of the key characteristics of any given LCA. The following section gives further details regarding LCAs. The amended “Landscape Guide” (2009) provide an overview

to the different character areas identified by the LANDMAP process and introduces the key landscape issues for each landscape type.

## **GWYNEDD LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS OVERVIEW**

46. The LANDMAP assessment has indicated that Gwynedd's landscape is varied and of a very high standard.
47. The Gwynedd Landscape Strategy, which is available to view online, is based on the LANDMAP methodology identified and mapped 16 distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in the Gwynedd Local Authority Planning area. These are illustrated in appendix 1.
48. LCAs are unique areas which have their own particular identity. LCAs provide a strategic approach to classifying the landscape. They are formed by distilling the information and particularly the digitised Aspect Area boundaries formed during the LANDMAP process. This involves the amalgamation of information from all five Aspects of the "evaluated" elements of LANDMAP (Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape) to form landscape areas that are broadly speaking of a similar nature within their boundaries but distinct from the adjoining landscape areas.
49. The LCA data sheets in the amended "Landscape Guide" (2009) are set out to allow for an easy assimilation of the main attributes of each of the LCA's defined within the UDP Area. The information sheets highlight the key landscape issues to be considered in connection with development proposals within each type of area. These issues are structured under headings relating to particular landscape forms and functions. They can be used as prompts to determine what should be demonstrated or be accounted for by a proposal to ensure landscapes are protected. The format of information provides:
  - i) a brief description of the landscape character area
  - ii) a location map showing the boundary of the landscape character area
  - iii) the key design issues of each LCA, and
  - iv) the likely future issues facing each LCA
50. Alternatively, more place-specific detail can be found in the digitised version of the LANDMAP study on the CCW website. Users are encouraged to access the information from this site in order to obtain a more comprehensive and detailed information of a particular site's landscape value.
51. When assessing planning applications that are likely to have an impact on the character of the landscape, proposals should be reviewed against the relevant landscape character area statements and where appropriate the more specific detailed information that is available on the CCW website. This information should be assessed where development could have an impact upon the form, appearance and setting of the built and natural landscape and its features. Where appropriate, planning applications, will be required to demonstrate how proposals have been informed by the Gwynedd Landscape SPG. In addition, where a site lies on or near the boundary of another character area, or where potential visual impacts are wide ranging, the adjacent character area(s) must be referred to as well.

52. When assessing a development proposal's impact on the features of a particular landscape character area, questions that should be considered should include:

- i) Is the type, scale or form of development likely to result in a visible change to the site and its locality?
- ii) Would development directly impact upon any key characteristics?
- iii) Would development or land use conflict with the key design issues of the area?
- iv) Would development or land use support the overall management strategy and guidance notes contained within the landscape character area statements
- v) What changes have been made to fit in with local landscape character as identified by landscape resources?

53. Opportunities to enhance landscape character and minimise negative impacts on it should be addressed through the development location and design process. They may be secured by planning conditions where necessary. The following outlines some of the general landscape considerations when assessing planning applications:

- i) that the development is sympathetic to the surrounding area in terms of scale, size, form, density, location, layout, symmetry, quality and suitability of materials, aspect, microclimate and density of building/land use and the space between buildings;
- ii) the incorporation of key landscape features or details within the development e.g. hedgerows, traditional walls, space for planting of native species etc;
- iii) the protection of key landscape features such as trees, hedgerows and other vegetation cover from disturbance and damage during construction;
- iv) the reclamation and remediation of contaminated land;
- v) ensuring that new built development maintains and, if appropriate, enhances distinctive landscape character;
- vi) seeking to maintain characteristic land cover, vegetation patterns, contours and textures of the landscape and its ecological and cultural value; encouraging the creation, restoration and management of 'mosaic landscapes' through the restoration of a variety of semi natural habitats;
- vii) that the development will not cause significant harm to important views into, out of or across centres, villages, rural villages or open countryside;
- viii) supporting improved land management through sustainable farming techniques;
- ix) that nature conservation features are protected and enhanced and provision is made for their management.
- x) that the tranquillity of areas is not compromised by inappropriate development e.g. lighting schemes

## Glossary

**Aspects** – A theme or layer of landscape information. There are five different Aspects assessed in LANDMAP, these are: Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape, Cultural Landscape

**Aspect Area** - A discrete geographic area of relatively homogenous character identified within a particular aspect. In GIS it will be represented as a single polygon. An [evaluated] aspect can be either visual and sensory, geological landscapes, landscape habitats, historical landscape or cultural landscape.

**Character (in relation to landscape character)** – recognisable distinctiveness created by a particular combination of aspect variation, as manifest as particular patterns of elements. It does not indicate whether an area is better or worse than another.

**Conserve/Conservation (in relation to landscape character)** – actions taken to maintain features and assemblages of features in good condition; may include mitigation measures.

**Element in relation to landscape character** – physical component of the landscape that may be vested with cultural significance (e.g. a road, hedge, tree)

**Enhance/Enhancement (in relation to landscape character)** – actions to improve the condition or character of an area through restoration, reinforcement, creation or re-creation.

**Feature (in relation to landscape character)** – distinctive or prominent element (e.g. rocky outcrop, church spire) or pattern of elements (e.g. a particular ground-covering) contributing to landscape character.

**GIS/Geographic Information System** - an organised collection of computer hardware and software designed to efficiently create, manipulate, analyse and display all types of geographically or spatially referenced data.

**LANDMAP** - a specially devised national landscape information system. Information about the landscape is gathered, mapped, organised and evaluated through application of a nationally consistent methodology.

**Landscape Character Area (LCA)** – A discrete geographic area of relatively homogenous character identified from the structured analysis of the five evaluated LANDMAP aspects. These areas are not based on the value of the landscape but its characteristics.

**Planning Policy Wales (PPW)** – document produced by the Welsh Assembly Government setting out National Planning Policies.

**Protect/Protection (in relation to landscape character)** – a proactive approach to maintaining the integrity of an area's landscape character through a combination of creation, restoration, reinforcement and conservation. It may be as much concerned with strengthening an area's character as preventing direct threats.

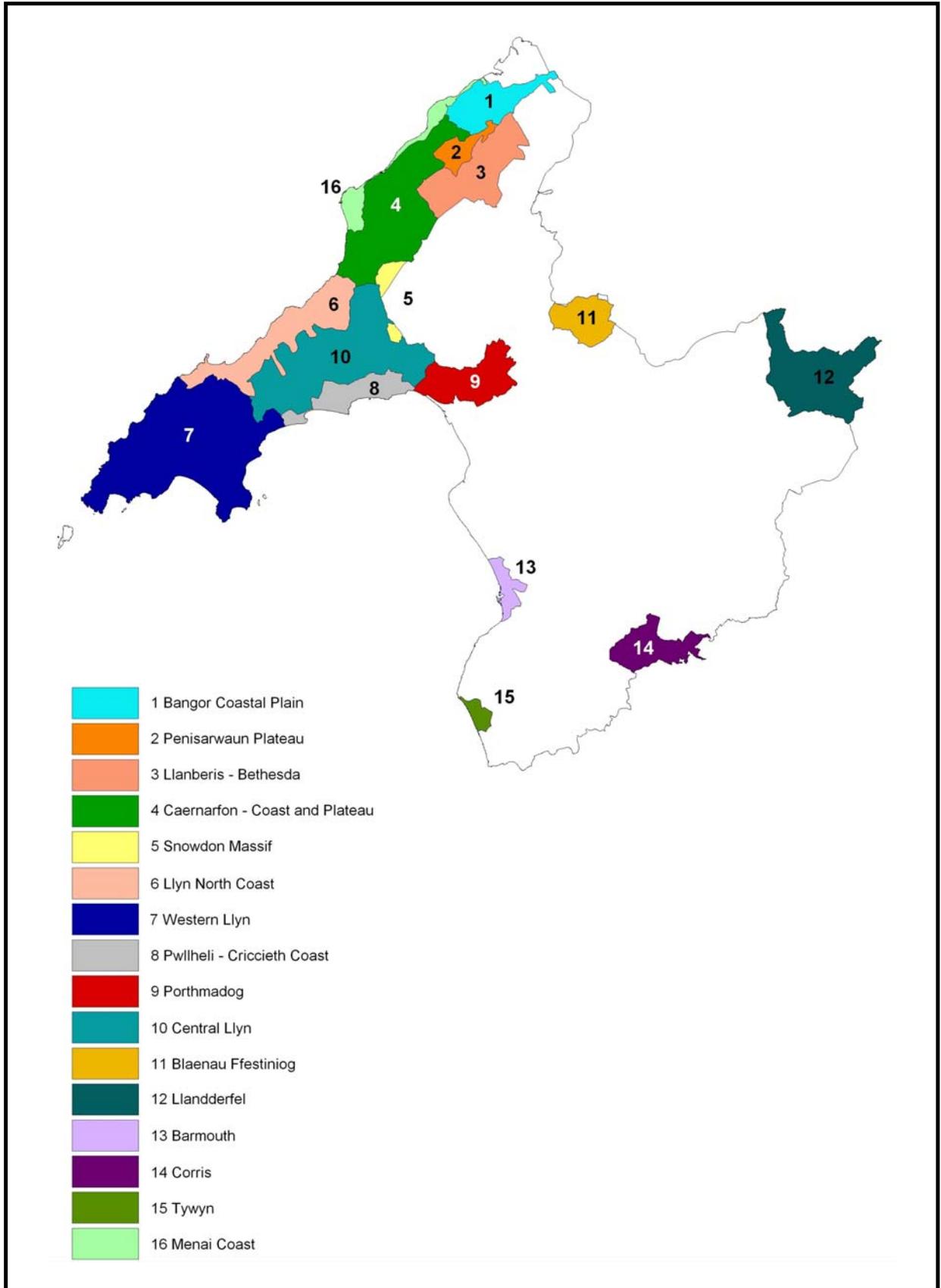
**Quality Assurance** – the design and implementation of systematic activities aimed at preventing quality problems.

**Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)** – non-statutory guidance produced by the Local Planning Authority to expand upon particular policies

**Unitary Development Plan** – document that sets out the strategic and detailed planning policies for a local authority area, designed to achieve particular aims and objectives.

APPENDIX 1

GWYNEDD LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS



## APPENDIX 2

### **POLICY B10 - PROTECTING AND ENHANCING LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AREAS**

**Proposals for development in Landscape Conservation Areas will be assessed against the following criteria:**

- 1. the impact of the proposed development on the positive features in the landscape and those elements of it that contribute to the distinctive character of the local landscape;**
- 2. the proposed location, design and materials of the proposed development and its ability to integrate with the landscape;**
- 3. the economic and social benefits of the proposed development in relation to criterion 1 and 2 above.**

**All developments will have to be designed and landscaped to a good standard, ensuring that appropriate landscape elements that function as either mitigation measures or are important to ensure integration are included. Consideration will be given to the information provided by the LANDMAP information system about the character and quality of the landscape in each area.**

**3.3.9 Explanation** - The methodology of the LANDMAP information system has shown that the quality of the landscape in parts of the Plan area render them worthy of being designated Landscape Conservation Areas. The areas are as follows:

1. Western Area of Llŷn (outside the AONB)
2. Porthmadog and surrounds
3. Porthmadog – Penrhyndeudraeth
4. Rhosgadfan - Llanberis – Mynydd Llandygai
5. Bethesda – Rachub
6. Cwm Bowydd, Blaenau Ffestiniog
7. Cwmorthin
8. Cwm Teigl
9. Penrhyn Estate
10. Vaynol Estate and surrounds
11. Country Park to the west of Groeslon

**3.3.10** The aim of this policy is to ensure that any development, whether it be a new building, a proposal to adapt a building or a development proposal that affects walls, 'cloddiau', hedges (or other field boundaries) hard surfaces, coppices, water courses etc., which has to be located within the identified Landscape Conservation Areas maintains, enhances or restores the acknowledged character and quality of the areas. A good standard of design will be required, together with appropriate siting and landscaping. Materials appropriate to the local area will be expected. The economic and social benefits of any development will be taken into account in the consideration of planning applications. Any harm to the landscape that would arise from the development will only be justified where the economic and/or social benefits are overriding. In cases where these factors outweigh the potential adverse effects, the Local Planning Authority will seek to minimise those effects and will, where possible, seek to enhance features of importance. The results of the LANDMAP assessment of the landscape, and the principles identified in the Gwynedd Design Guide and The Landscape working for Gwynedd 2001 will all be considered in assessing the suitability of all developments.

- 3.3.11** All of the Landscape Conservation Areas, apart from the Pwllheli - Criccieth – Porthmadog, Penrhyn Estate, Vaynol Estate, and the Country Park to the west of Groeslon, area, border either the AONB or Snowdonia National Park. The recognised strategic importance of the AONB and the National Park means that it is essential that development on land visible from the AONB or the National Park, or development that would affect the views into the AONB or National Park is carefully managed. This factor will be considered in assessing planning applications for development within the relevant Landscape Conservation Areas.

### **POLICY B11 - OPEN SPACES BETWEEN OR IN VILLAGES OR TOWNS**

**Proposals that would cause significant harm to the role or importance of open land between or within towns/villages or on land important to the rural/urban character of the area, town or village will be refused.**

- 3.3.12** **Explanation** - The areas of open land shown on the Inset Maps were selected because they conform to one or more of these criteria:

- a) they make a positive contribution to the quality and physical character of towns, villages, rural villages or the rural landscape
- b) provide a clear gap between villages and towns thus reinforcing community identity
- c) are important to the community - providing greenery on their doorstep, provide visual variety
- ch) provide an important link between a town or village and the wider countryside beyond its boundaries
- d) they are of local ecological, geological or archaeological value

- 3.3.13** In order to assess the impact of a proposed development on the role or importance of a designated open space, or any other place which becomes evident during the Plan's lifetime which meets one or more of the above criteria, the Local Planning Authority will consider the following factors:

- a) the effect of the development on the character of the built environment
- b) the effect of the development on the local landscape
- c) the need for the development to be located there
- ch) the impact of the development on the ecological, geological or archaeological value of the site
- d) the impact of the development on the amenities of local residents

### **POLICY B12 - PROTECTING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS**

**Proposals that are within or on sites visible from a park and garden identified and described in Part 1 of the Register of Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Interest in Wales will be refused if they cause significant harm to their character, appearance or setting.**

**Consideration will be given to the information about the historic landscapes identified in Part 2 of the same Register when assessing the impact of proposals that are of such a scale and magnitude as to have more than a local impact.**

**3.3.14** **Explanation** - Research work undertaken jointly with the Countryside Council for Wales, Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has produced a series of joint publications referred to as the 'Register of Historic Landscapes Parks, and Gardens of Special Interest in Wales'. A complete list of the sites included on the Register is included in Appendix 1. The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that registered historic landscapes, parks and gardens are protected and enhanced.

**3.3.15** When assessing the suitability of proposals within or in close proximity to registered Historic Parks and Gardens, consideration will be given to the impact of the development on the features that make the area important, as identified in the relevant part of the Register. The ASIDOHL process (Assessment of direct and indirect physical effects on an area's historical features) will be used in order to assess the impact on areas included in the Register. Where appropriate, a development that enhances an area by maintaining or restoring traditional features will be approved.

### **POLICY B14 – PROTECTING THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK**

**Development and land use changes will not be permitted where these would adversely affect the qualities and special character of the Snowdonia National Park by:**

- 1. causing significant visual intrusion, and/or**
- 2. being insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape**

**Explanation** – The Council recognises the need to protect the Park's landscape and ecological value. This means managing development on land within the Plan area, which is beyond the Park's boundary but within its vicinity. The aim of the above policy is to ensure that the land around the Park is safeguarded from unsuitable or unsightly developments. It is crucial to ensure that no new developments damage the National Park's visual amenities or landscape. Any development permitted near the Park's boundary or on sites that are visible from public vantage points within it will be required to complement the landscape and must be designed and located so as to be beneficial to the area's appearance.

### **POLICY B22 - BUILDING DESIGN**

**Proposals for new buildings, extensions or alterations of existing buildings will be refused unless it can be shown to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that they conform with the following criteria:**

- 1. that the proposal respects the site and its surroundings in terms of its scale, size, form, density, location, layout, symmetry, quality and suitability of materials, aspect, microclimate and density of building/land use and the space around and between buildings;**
- 2. that it does not have an unacceptable detrimental effect on the form and character of the surrounding landscape or townscape, or on the local natural or historical environment;**
- 3. that it does not have an unacceptable detrimental effect on prominent public views into, out of or across centres, villages, rural villages or open countryside.**

**Proposals that fail to show (in a manner appropriate to the nature, scale and location of the proposed development) how the proposal has taken**

**account of good design principles will be refused. The following types of development will be required to undertake a Design Assessment and provide a formal 'Design Statement' with the planning application:**

- 1. major new development**
- 2. development that is likely to have a significant visual effect**
- 3. development affecting a sensitive site area or building**

**3.5.2 Explanation** - In order to achieve a good quality of design it is imperative to gain an understanding of the relationship between a proposed development and its surroundings as well as the way in which the relationship between the individual elements surrounding the development site create character. The features of the site and the surrounding area should always be examined before preparing plans for the changes in question. The main advantage of this approach is that a design relevant to a particular site is secured (rather than opting for an 'off the peg' design), a design that either retains any special distinct character identified in the assessment or which reverses past tendencies where former development patterns have not responded to their context.

**3.5.3** The Council has published a series of guidance notes, - Gwynedd Design Guide 2002, and The Landscape working for Gwynedd 2001 to raise awareness of a number of design principles.

**3.5.4** All applicants will be required to present detailed illustrative materials with the planning application. Illustrative material might comprise photographs of the development site and its surroundings, drawings of the proposed design itself, and where appropriate, plans of the proposed layout in relation to neighbouring development and uses. The way in which this is done should be consistent with the nature and scale of the development. In some cases a formal Design Statement will be required in addition to the normal plans that indicate the various elevations of the proposed building. In other cases, a short written explanation should suffice. Any Design Statement, formal or otherwise, submitted in support of a planning application will need to address sustainable design.

**3.5.5** Prospective developers are encouraged to discuss whether a Design Statement is required, and the requirements of the Statement with planning officers before submitting a planning application. The statement should clarify the following:

- the design principles and the design concept
- how these are reflected in the proposed development
- how the design is compatible with the site and local area, and
- how the development will conform with the Plan policies and the guidance referred to above

**3.5.6** The Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) can also be consulted on matters involving design. DCFW's purpose is to champion high standards of architecture, landscape and urban design in Wales, promoting wider understanding of the importance of good quality in the built environment, supporting skill building, encouraging social inclusion and sustainable development.

## **POLISI B27 - LANDSCAPING SCHEMES**

**Proposals will be approved provided that high quality soft/hard landscaping appropriate to the site and the locality is provided. Wherever practical, it is expected that trees, hedges, pools, water courses, estate features, 'cloddiau', slate fences, stone walls and any other features that are a part of**

**the landscape are safeguarded and enhanced. The following factors will be considered when assessing the suitability of a landscaping plan.**

- 1. that proposed planting creates a link with nearby planting in order to add to wildlife corridors and habitats;**
- 2. ensuring that trees, hedgerows, water features and any other features on the site that are important to the character of the landscape, the village/town or its setting, the setting of a Listed Building or Ancient Monument, a conservation area or its setting, or nature conservation are kept on the site and protected during the building process and in the longterm once the development is completed,**
- 3. that the planting of any new trees, wild flowers, shrubs or hedges is done effectively using local native species, except for exceptional cases where the use of local native species would not complement the current dominant character of the site,**
- 4. in the case of a development that is visible from the Llŷn or Anglesey AONB or the Snowdonia National Park, that important views in and out of the sensitive landscapes are protected.**

**When a development is approved, planning conditions and/or planning agreements will be used in order to ensure that appropriate conservation/protection measures, planting and/or aftercare work takes place in the long term after the development has been completed.**

**3.5.15 Explanation** - It is important that landscaping matters are considered from the outset as part of the design for the proposal. The aim should always be to try and ensure that the development blends into its surroundings whilst creating an attractive setting for the building(s).

**3.5.16** The Council has published a series of guidance notes - Gwynedd Design Guide 2002, and The Landscape Working for Gwynedd 2007 to raise awareness of a number of design aspects, and these should be considered by all developers. The latter document is based on the results of the LANDMAP assessment. This assessment identified 16 Landscape Character Areas (LCA), which are shown in Appendix 2. Each LCA has its own distinctive landscape. Wherever there are features that are important to the character and distinctiveness of a locality, the Local Planning Authority will aim to protect them. In considering development proposals that affect trees, further guidance is included in Supplementary Planning Guidance on Trees and Development (to be prepared).

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **USEFUL CONTACTS**

#### **Development Control (Planning)**

##### ***Arfon Area***

Planning Service  
Regulatory Department (Planning, Transport and Public Protection)  
Arfon Area Office  
Penrallt  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1BN  
Tel: (01286) 682765  
Fax: (01286) 682771  
e-mail: [Planning@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:Planning@gwynedd.gov.uk)

##### ***Dwyfor Area***

Planning Service  
Regulatory Department (Planning, Transport and Public Protection)  
Dwyfor Area Office  
Ffordd y Cob  
Pwllheli  
Gwynedd  
LL53 5AA  
Tel: (01758) 704118  
Fax: (01758) 704053  
e-mail: [Planning@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:Planning@gwynedd.gov.uk)

##### ***Meirionnydd Area***

Planning Service  
Regulatory Department (Planning, Transport and Public Protection)  
Meirionnydd Area Office  
Cae Penarlâg  
Dolgellau  
Gwynedd  
LL40 2YB  
Tel: (01341) 424414  
Fax: (01341) 424440  
e-mail: [Planning@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:Planning@gwynedd.gov.uk)

#### **Planning Policy (Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd)**

Environmental Unit  
Regulatory Department (Planning, Transport and Public Protection)  
Shirehall Street  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH  
Tel: (01286) 679542

Supplementary Planning Guidance – Landscape Character

Fax: (01286) 673324

e-mail: [PolisiCynllunio@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:PolisiCynllunio@gwynedd.gov.uk)