

**Flintshire County Council
PLANNING STRATEGY
DEVELOPER GUIDANCE NOTE**

May 2015

SUBJECT: Speculative Housing Development Proposals

Context

This guidance note provides guidance on the Council's requirements for supporting evidence and justification to be submitted, in the event that developers are considering the submission of speculative planning applications for housing development, on the basis of the Council's present housing land supply position. This does not mean that applications are necessarily invited.

Status of this Note

This note has been considered and endorsed by the Council's Planning Strategy Group as well as approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2015. It therefore takes immediate effect and applies to any speculative applications currently with the Council as well as future ones yet to be submitted.

Speculative Housing Development Proposals

According to the method of calculating housing land supply prescribed by the Welsh Government in Technical Advice Note 1 Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (TAN1), Flintshire does not currently have a five year supply of housing land. In accordance with paragraph 9.2.3 of PPW "*Local planning authorities must ensure that sufficient land is genuinely available or will become available to provide a 5-year supply of land for housing judged against the general objectives and the scale and location of development provided for in the development plan*".

TAN1 sets out how an authority must act when it does not have a 5 year land supply: "*The housing land supply figure should also be treated as a material consideration in determining planning applications for housing. Where the current study shows a land supply below the 5-year requirement or where the local planning authority has been unable to undertake a study (see 8.2 below), the need to increase supply should be given considerable weight when dealing with planning applications provided that the development would otherwise comply with development plan and national planning policies*". (Paragraph 6.2).

For the purposes of both paragraphs 9.2.3 of PPW and 6.2 of TAN1, reference to "the development plan" means the adopted Flintshire Unitary Development Plan.

In the event that a developer is considering submitting a planning application for housing development, justified on the basis of a shortfall in housing land supply, the Council will expect to see comprehensive evidence to justify such an application, in relation to:

1. The need for the development proposed

This should be set out in the context of the area local to the site, as well as Flintshire as a whole. Regard should be had to the nature and function of the settlement within which the proposal is made, its role as part of the UDP spatial strategy, and how the identification of the site fits in with the requirement for a search sequence as referenced in paragraph 9.2.8 of PPW. This is to ensure that developers are following the same principles in terms of identifying sustainable sites as the Local Planning Authority are required to do, in the preparation of the LDP which is currently underway. This is also to ensure that any spatial strategy under development by the Council is not compromised by unjustified speculative applications for housing development.

2. Full Application

The Council would prefer the submission of a full application to allow the Council to properly assess the proposal in terms of the need to be met, the housing to be provided, and the deliverability of the scheme. Outline applications are not considered appropriate or acceptable to consider proposals for speculative development on the basis of a lack of housing land supply, as without full information it may prove difficult for the Council to be satisfied that the proposal represents a sustainable and deliverable form of development.

3. Sustainability Appraisal

A Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) is required to demonstrate why and how the site represents a sustainable form of development in relation to both the local and national policy context, the principles and objectives of which are set out in paragraphs 4.3.1 and 4.4.3 respectively of PPW.

4. Viability Assessment

A viability assessment is required in order to demonstrate that site can be developed on the basis of accommodating all of the Council's policy requirements (e.g. POS, affordable housing, education, highways etc.), as well as providing all other necessary infrastructure required. This is to assist in assessing the sustainability and deliverability of the proposal.

5. Housing Delivery Statement

The Council requires the submission of this essential evidence by the developer in order to demonstrate how the development can deliver housing to help to reduce whatever is considered to be the identified shortfall in housing supply, within 5 years from the application date. This should clearly identify a timeline for the development including the expected start date, the annual completion rate, as well as the expected

completion date for the whole development. This should also clearly identify which developer(s) will be building the homes. This requirement is also to ensure compliance with advice in paragraph 9.2.3 of PPW: *“This means that sites must be free, or readily freed, from planning, physical and ownership constraints, and economically feasible for development, so as to create and support sustainable communities where people want to live”*.

Advisory Notes

- A failure or unwillingness to provide any/all of these essential requirements will leave the Council unable to adequately assess the sustainability of the proposed development.
- This is because speculative developments that do not otherwise comply with policy must clearly demonstrate their full sustainable development credentials.
- This is also why outline applications are not considered suitable or appropriate to make such exceptions cases.
- This is also relevant in terms of the LDP candidate sites that are now publicly available, as any speculative sites that come forward must be capable of demonstrating why they are better/more sustainable than other option sites yet to be considered by the Council as part of progressing the LDP.
- Whilst all sites are considered on their merits, speculative development sites must also clearly show that they do not compromise the ability of the Council to develop a sustainable strategy for the LDP.
- Any consent recommended will be time limited to commencement within two years.
- Any applications for renewal of such consents will need to be fully justified as the basis on which they were originally permitted i.e. as an exception based on an urgent need, should result in commencement first time around. Such application for renewal will be given careful consideration and will not automatically be renewed.