

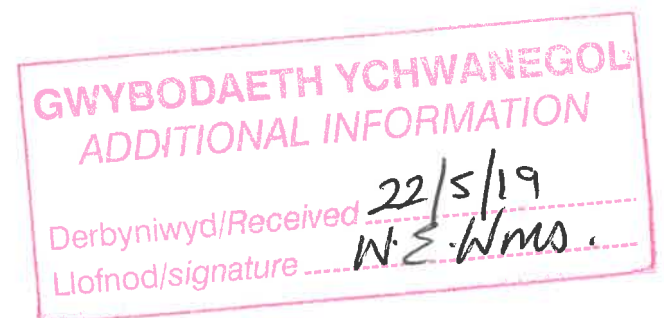
Forward Planning

11 Darsefield Road, Childwall, Liverpool L16 0JR Tel:0151 722 9616 Mob: 0774 5038482
e-mail: forward.planning16@gmail.com

Additional information regarding housing mix – unit size and tenure

**Planning application for conversion of building to 14 flats at Market Hall,
Church Street, Blaenau Ffestiniog**

Application ref no: C19/0154/03/LL



Background

This application relates to the provision of 14no units of rented social housing. These are provided in a mix of 8no 1-bedroom apartments and 6no 2-bedroom apartments. Preparation of the application was commenced during 2018.

Two significant planning policy documents have been produced by Gwynedd Council since that process began and, for this reason, the methodology and advice contained in them has not been followed in the preparation process. The Supplementary Planning Guidance "Housing Mix" (SPG) was adopted in October 2018 and the Gwynedd Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) was adopted in May 2019. Formal pre-application advice was sought and obtained from the local planning authority in 2018 prior to pre-application consultation taking place last summer and to the submission of the planning application. This advice similarly pre-dated the SPG and LHMA.

In addition, advice has been provided by Gwynedd's Strategic Housing Manager with specific regard to the ward within which the site lies (email 17th May 2019, attached below).

Having regard to the two documents and their findings and advice, it is submitted that the proposal addresses identified needs both in terms of the tenure of the properties and in terms of the mix of sizes of units.

It is important to consider that the application site is an existing building and imposes constraints on the layout and configuration of the development. The initial submission proposed 13no 1-bedroom apartments and 1no 2-bedroom. Following reservations being expressed by the Planning Manager regarding this mix, alternative layouts have been considered. This included a scheme which included 2no 3-bedroom apartments which was forwarded to the council for informal comment. However, on further consideration, this provision was not considered satisfactory and the current scheme was decided upon, having had regard to the advice from officers and the SPG and LHMA.

SPG

The SPG addresses the issues of future demand for housing in chapter 5. Table 7 shows the projected numbers of households of different sizes in Gwynedd for 2014 and 2026. The overall number of households is projected to increase by 3480 over the period. The largest increase by household size of 1 person households (2898) and second highest 2 person (no children)(707). This suggests a demand for smaller properties, particularly 1-bedroom.

Chapter 6 sets out how planning for a more balanced housing market will be achieved. Table 9 (i) identifies a need for more smaller homes. There is a basic need for a supply of affordable housing for households with a smaller income where the provision of 2- and 3-bedroom apartments and houses will increase choice for smaller families and young couples, and older households

who wish to downsize. 4- and 5-bedroom properties would be too large for their requirements and/or unaffordable. The provision of some 1-bedroom apartments and houses “could help meet the needs of some single young people and young couples and some older households”.

LHMA

The purpose of the LHMA set out in para 10. “The purpose of the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) is to provide an assessment, based on a robust evidence base of the nature and level of housing demand and need within Gwynedd. The LHMA, can also be used as a tool for negotiating affordable housing provision when determining planning applications and allocating Social Housing Grant (SHG).”

The key findings of the LHMA with regard to social housing is that 53% of the existing stock has 3 or more bedrooms. Only 14% has 1 bedroom, limiting the scope for downsizing. Social rented accommodation is in high demand. There is housing need across all tenures. 1900 applicants are currently registered for social housing in Gwynedd. 71% of those on the social housing register have requested 1- or 2-bedroom properties.

The number of households in Gwynedd is projected to increase by 8% to 2035. The figure for 1-bedroom households is 18%. This reflects the figures cited above from the SPG.

The supply of new housing will not meet demand for affordable housing in Gwynedd at current levels of building. The total annual need for social and intermediate housing is 707 units.

Strategic Housing Manager's advice

At the individual ward level, there are 79 households on the waiting list. 39% of them want 1-bedroom accommodation and 36% want 2-bedroom. On this basis, there is clearly a high demand for 1- and 2-bedroom properties. His advice is that there is no need to insist on any 3-bedroom properties and would encourage a 60/40 split between 1- and 2- bedroom properties, in this instance, 8no 1-bedroom and 6no 2-bedroom apartments.

The proposal

The apartments in the proposed scheme will be taken on a long-term lease by My Space Housing Solutions, a Registered Social Landlord and Registered Charity who are licenced under the Rent Smart Wales scheme.

It is submitted that the proposal will assist in meeting existing demand for housing both in terms of unit size and in terms of tenure. The 1- and 2-bedroom units will add to the existing stock of smaller housing identified as being increasingly required in both the SPG and LHMA.

It has been identified that, at current levels, there will not be sufficient new housing to meet demand for affordable housing as a whole in Gwynedd. The

proposed development will make a contribution toward the 707 units of social and intermediate housing required each year. It will also help to increase the proportion of smaller units of social housing, in particular helping to address the 71% on the social housing register requesting 1- or 2-bedroom properties. At the local (ward) level, the identified demand for 1- and 2-bedroom properties would be reflected in the proposed split of apartments of those sizes.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, it is submitted that the proposal will help to meet an identified demand for smaller housing units and for social housing in Gwynedd.