National Planning Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024) ('PPW')

1. The primary objective of PPW:

> *'is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty. A well functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places.'*

2. PPW states that:

> *'The national sustainable placemaking outcomes …. should be used to inform the preparation of development plans and the assessment of development proposals.'*

3. Sections 3 (Strategic and Spatial Choices) and Section 6 (Distinctive and Natural Places) are most relevant with regards to landscape considerations.

4. Paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 confirm that:

> *'3.9 The special characteristics of an area should be central to the design of a development. The layout, form, scale and visual appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are important planning considerations. A clear rationale behind the design decisions made, based on site and context analysis, a strong vision, performance requirements and design principles, should be sought throughout the development process and expressed, when appropriate, in a design and access statement.*
>
> *3.10 In areas recognised for their particular landscape, townscape, cultural or historic character and value it can be appropriate to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. In those areas, the impact of development on the.' existing character, the scale and siting of new development, and the use of appropriate building materials (including where possible sustainably produced materials from local sources), will be particularly important.'*

5. Paragraph 6.3.5 also notes that:

> *'The statutory landscape designations that apply in Wales are National Parks, and AONBs. Planning authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to National Parks and AONB purposes. This duty applies in relation to all activities affecting National Parks and AONBs, whether those activities lie within, or in the setting of, the designated areas.'*

6. Furthermore, para. 6.3.9 states that:

> *'The special qualities of designated areas should be given weight in the development planning and the development management process. Proposals in National Parks and AONBs must be carefully assessed to ensure that their effects on those features which the designation is intended to protect are acceptable.'*

7. Furthermore, paragraph 6.3.12 states that:

'Planning authorities should provide for the conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of local landscapes. This may include policies for landscape features, characteristics and qualities of local significance, and the designation of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs).' …. 'LANDMAP and any associated landscape character assessments (including the register of historic landscapes in Wales) should be used to inform local landscape policies and SPG, and to help identify or revise SLAs.'

Technical Advice Notes

8. PPW is supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Each 'Technical Advice Note' (TAN) provides detailed planning advice on a different subject. They should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when they are preparing development plans. The TANs that may influence the landscape and visual elements of a local plan are considered below.

TAN12: Design (2016)

9. Within 'Section 4: Delivering Good Design', the following advice is provided in relation to landscape and visual considerations. When considering 'appraising character', TAN12 identifies a number of factors that should be considered, including the following (paragraph 4.8):

- Topography;
- Use of materials;
- Architecture and historic quality;
- Landscape character;
- Field patterns and land use patterns;
- Distinctive views (in and out of the site);
- Skylines and vistas;
- Boundary treatments; and
- Locally distinctive features.

10. Specific mention of landscape appraisal is considered at paragraph 4.11, stating that:

'Appraisal of the landscape should focus on its quality in terms of geology and geomorphology, vegetation and habitats, visual and sensory quality and historic and cultural quality. "LANDMAP" is one method of assessment which has the potential to provide a framework and information base from which good design and management can be developed.'

11. The legibility of an area is also identified when considering appraising character, with appraisals of legibility to concentrate on landmarks, including landmark buildings or landscape features, junctions, views and vistas, barriers and boundaries.

12. Within Paragraph 5.5.1. it is considered that:

'the way in which development relates to its urban or rural landscape... context is critical to its success. Because of this, an understanding of landscape quality, including its historic character, is fundamental to the design process.'

13. Adding to this, the text goes on to consider that good design is dependent on working with the natural constraints and historic character of the landscape, stating in paragraph 5.5.2 that:

'It is particularly important that proposals to amend or create new landscape are not considered as an afterthought and that the long-term impact of development on the landscape is fully understood.'

14. TAN12 also identifies the importance of taking into consideration the landscape qualities of settlements, including its contribution to views and links to the open countryside and historic character within the design process.



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