

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MB/CS/5814/14

Aled Roberts AM
Assembly Member for North Wales
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

16 December 2014

Aled.Roberts@assembly.wales

Dear Aled Roberts AM,

I am writing in response to the question you raised with Lesley Griffiths AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, during Plenary on 26 November about local authorities' use of section 106 agreements. I am replying as this is a planning matter, responsibility for which falls under my portfolio as Minister for Natural Resources.

Planning permissions with section 106 agreements are an important mechanism for securing affordable homes and the Welsh Government has published guidance for local authorities on the use of section 106 agreements for this purpose. The aim of this guidance, which was published in 2008, is to assist authorities to improve the preparation, negotiation and implementation of section 106 agreements so that more affordable housing is delivered through the planning system. An update to this guidance was subsequently published in 2009 to address the impact of the economic downturn on the housing market in order to help maintain the delivery of affordable housing, with a particular focus on viability issues. The publication of this guidance was supplemented by training events for local authority planning officers. We have also funded further training on viability and development economics in January this year, with over 50 planning officers attending.

Last year I commissioned research into the barriers in the planning system to the delivery of housing and this provided part of the evidence for my *Positive Planning* proposals. This research identified a number of common problems and barriers within the existing planning system that result in delays to the delivery of planning decisions for housing. *Positive Planning* makes proposals to promote efficient development management procedures, including more consistency in the local delivery of the planning service. Problems related to section 106 agreements was one of the barriers identified by the research and I will shortly be commissioning further research to examine this issue in more detail.

Another important element in improving the delivery of housing, including affordable housing, is the adoption of Local Development Plans (LDPs). At all LDP examinations my officials seek to maximise delivery of affordable housing. Over half of local planning

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authorities now have an adopted LDP and *Positive Planning* reinforces their role as the cornerstone of the Welsh planning system.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a vertical line.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
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