

The Conversion of Rural Buildings Supplementary Planning Guidance



**Final Version
July 2011**



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been prepared to provide supporting information and advice on the implementation of the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies relating to the conversion of rural buildings. The SPG does not form part of the UDP but supplements policies within it, and is a material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission and the conditions to be attached to planning permissions.
- 1.2 A draft version of this SPG was subject to a 6 week public consultation process. This allowed members of the public, councillors, businesses and other interested parties to comment on and inform the document. The aim is to achieve a broad consensus of support for the principles and guidance presented in this document.
- 1.3 Throughout the rural areas of the City and County of Swansea (the County) there are numerous stone built barns and other traditional rural buildings which create locally distinctive development, contribute to the attractive countryside scene and merit safeguarding. These buildings have an important role to play in meeting the future needs of rural areas and both national and local planning policy supports their re-use for purposes that contribute to the local economy and the principles of sustainable development.
- 1.4 Changes in the patterns and methods of farming have resulted in many rural buildings becoming economically redundant or functionally ill-suited to modern agricultural practices. As a result, owners have looked for new economic uses which in many instances have involved conversion to non agricultural purposes, such as holiday lets. At the same time an increasing number of people are seeking to live and work in the countryside and this has generated greater demand to convert rural buildings to residential accommodation. However, national and local planning policy presumes against the conversion of buildings to residential use where such buildings may suitably be reused for business purposes.
- 1.5 This guidance confirms the Council's commitment to safeguarding rural buildings for purposes that contribute to the rural economy. It sets out planning guidance that responds to the key threats to such buildings and provides a basis for clear and consistent decision making.



2.0 Structure of the Document

- 2.1 Part 1 sets out the planning policy context in relation to the re-use of rural buildings. Part 2 details the requirements of the key UDP policies relating to conversion of existing rural buildings, specifically in relation to: extent of policy coverage; determining suitability for conversion and residential conversions. Part 3 provides guidance on submitting a planning application for the conversion of a rural building.

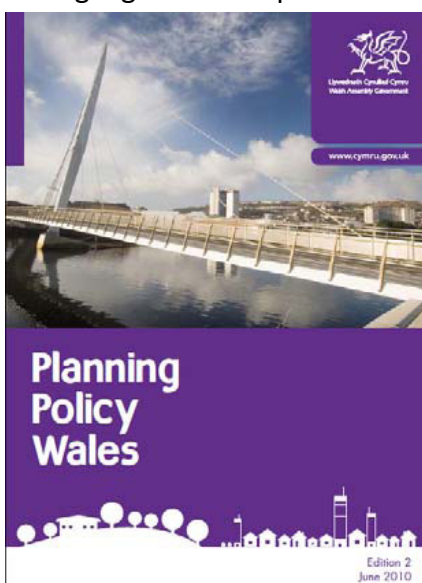


Part 1: The Planning Context

3.0 National Planning Policy

- 3.1 National planning guidance for rural areas is contained within **Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 2010**, as updated, which emphasises the need to balance the protection and enhancement of the countryside with economic, social and recreational needs.
- 3.2 PPW provides guidance on the reuse and adaptation of existing rural buildings (paras. 7.6.8 – 7.6.10), for further details see: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/publications/100720planningpolicywalesen.pdf>.

It highlights the important role such buildings can play in meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development, as well as for tourism, sport and recreation. Business re-use is particularly encouraged within or adjoining farm building complexes. Conversion of redundant rural buildings to residential accommodation on the other hand is recognised to have minimal economic impact and the potential to be detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings. Support is given to local planning authorities to resist residential re-use apart from in exceptional circumstances (details of which are set out in Chapter 9 of this document). National guidance is clear that only those buildings suitable for conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension or, where residential re-use has been justified, the creation of a residential curtilage does not have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside, will be acceptable. In situations where extensive work or an unacceptable curtilage is proposed similar control to that over new house building in the countryside will apply.



- 3.3 Further guidance is provided in **Technical Advice Note 6 (TAN 6) Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (July 2010)**, which states that the primary consideration when assessing planning applications for the conversion of rural buildings should be whether the nature and extent of use proposed is acceptable in



planning terms. It should not normally be necessary to consider whether a building is needed any longer for its present agricultural or other purposes. However, local planning authorities should investigate the history of use where there is reasonable cause to believe that an attempt has been made to abuse the planning system by constructing new rural buildings with the benefit of permitted development rights with the intention of early conversion to another use.

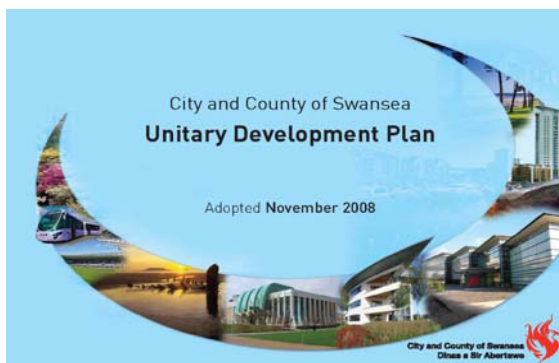
- 3.4 TAN6 <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/policy/100722tan6en.pdf> generally prefers business re-use over residential re-use (paras 3.5 and 3.6 refer):

‘(3.5) The conversion of buildings which are currently in industrial or commercial use to dwellings may have an adverse impact on the local economy...(3.6) Whilst residential conversions have a minimal impact on the rural economy, conversions to holiday use can contribute more and may reduce pressure to use other houses in the area for holiday use.’

- 3.5 The TAN also emphasises that conversion proposals must respect landscape and local building styles and materials. Where a proposed re-use of a building may have a significant adverse effect on the visual amenity of a locality the local planning authority if minded to grant planning permission may impose conditions to secure improvement in the external appearance of the building.

4.0 Local Planning Policy

- 4.1 The **Swansea UDP (2008)** sets the local planning policy context for the County: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/udp>.



Under the provisions of Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, planning decisions must be made in accordance with the UDP unless material considerations indicate otherwise.



- 4.2 Part 1 of the UDP sets out the broad vision and strategic objectives for the development of the County. A number of Objectives and Strategic Policies are relevant to proposals for the conversion of rural buildings, including those which seek to promote sensitive design, sustainable development, employment opportunities and tourism initiatives as well as the protection and conservation of the countryside. A detailed list is set out in Appendix A.
- 4.3 Part 2 of the UDP translates these Objectives and Strategic Policies into more detailed policies and proposals. The most relevant in determining planning applications for the conversion of existing rural buildings is **Policy EC12**, which is the main UDP policy that this guidance supplements. This policy is consistent with national planning policy in placing an emphasis on supporting the rural economy by ensuring that economic uses are fully explored before applications for conversions to residential use are considered. The policy also aims to minimise any impact of re-use on the surrounding countryside by including criteria to ensure that only those buildings capable of conversion without a significant adverse effect on the locality will be granted consent. The full policy wording and supporting amplification is set out in Appendix B.



Left: Conversion of former barn for an economic use, Church Barns, Llanmadoc.

- 4.4 In essence the policy seeks to resist proposals that would:
- unacceptably alter the appearance and rural character of the original building,
 - not be in keeping with the locality,
 - involve major or complete reconstruction,
 - include obtrusive access provision, or
 - involve ancillary work that intrudes into the rural landscape.

More detailed guidance and advice on the policy criteria is given in Part 2 of this document.



4.5 Other relevant UDP policies are summarised below:

- (i) **EV1 (Design)** sets out the principles of good design that new development should accord with. If a proposed conversion scheme is considered acceptable in principle, this policy should be used to determine an appropriate design having regard to the characteristics of the building and surroundings.
- (ii) **EV2 (Siting and Location)** gives preference to the use of previously developed land and sets out specific requirements which must be given due regard, including undertaking an assessment of species and habitats (v).
- (iii) **EV12 (Lanes and Public Paths)** seeks to protect the character of lanes and public paths that contribute to the amenity, natural and historic qualities of an area. Proposals for the reuse of rural buildings involving requirements to set back improvement lines, remove hedgerows, or provide new access and visibility splays will be resisted where this would result in a loss of character. Any related works to lanes or public paths should be appropriate to the local character and not detract from the landscape or suburbanise the area.
- (iv) **EV20 (New Dwellings in the Countryside)** restricts occupancy of new build dwellings to those serving the rural economy and requires prior assessment of existing buildings to determine suitability for conversion for such purposes.
- (v) **EV21 (Rural Development)** provides guidance on non residential rural development. It supports appropriate development associated with farm diversification, in particular, economic re-use of existing buildings in accordance with Policy EC12.
- (vi) **EV22 (Countryside General Policy)** seeks to conserve and enhance the countryside throughout the County in terms of its natural heritage, natural resources, historic and cultural, environment and agricultural and recreational value.
- (vii) **EC11 (Rural Business Development)** Encourages appropriate small scale rural business development and gives preference to the suitable conversion of existing buildings over new build.



- (viii) **EC17 (Rural Tourism)** supports proposals for tourism and recreation development of an appropriate scale that relate acceptably to the existing pattern of development and their surroundings.
- (ix) **EC18 (Serviced Tourist Accommodation)** seeks to improve the range and quality of serviced tourist accommodation within rural areas through appropriate conversion schemes.
- (x) **EC19 (Unserviced Tourist Accommodation)** supports the provision of unserviced tourist accommodation through the conversion of existing appropriate rural buildings in accordance with Policy EC12.

4.6 Additional policies may be relevant dependant upon the nature and location of the proposed conversion. Likewise, not all of the above policies will be relevant in every case. The UDP Proposals Map <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=25531> will help to determine which policies are applicable to a particular site.

5.0 Associated Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

5.1 Within the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) proposals must also have regard to separate design guidance for that area- **Gower Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) Design Guide** <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/aonb> The Gower Design Guide focuses on the detailed design elements of proposed development within the Gower AONB. It contains a section on principles to be applied to rural building conversions including detailed design guidance in relation to openings, roofs, doors, windows, etc. The design guide should be read alongside this document which extends guidance on building conversions to all rural areas of the County.



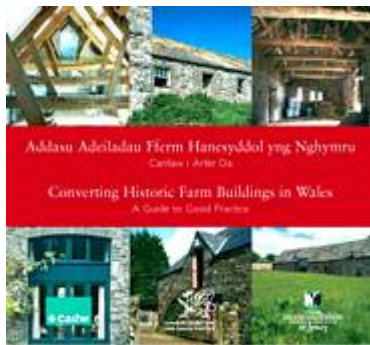
5.2 All development in all locations must also have regard to security in design. To assist in this process a separate supplementary planning guidance – ‘Planning For Community Safety’ is being prepared in partnership with South Wales Police <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/spg>



6.0 Further Guidance

6.1 Converting Historic Farm Buildings in Wales – A Good Practice Guide produced by Cadw and Monmouthshire County Council (2004)

<http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/historicenvironment/help-advice-and-grants/lookingafteryourproperty/bestpractice/?lang=en>



This document provides general guidance on the conversion of historic rural buildings in Wales. It sets out general design principles for achieving conversions without irreversible loss of the historic character of the original building. Of most relevance to this document is the section on 'types of conversions' which looks at what alternatives there may be to residential accommodation. Potential alternatives identified in addition to those listed under Policy EC12

include: craft centre; volunteer base camp; outlet for farmers' market; offices; galleries and workshops. Larger buildings may be suitable for educational uses by schools/ lectures/conferences, etc; gym facilities; theatre productions/travelling cinema; barn dances; wedding receptions; or even serve as a local church.

- 6.2 Where the rural building forms part of a complex, or the proposed conversion relates to a complex of buildings, particular attention must be given to the functional relationship between the conversion and associated buildings, including any farm on which they are situated. Conversions into separately owned/occupied units must respect this association and the collective character. Furthermore where a group of buildings is to be divided up careful consideration must be given to how amenity or car parking space is to be provided to avoid destroying the integrity and historic interest of the grouping. The courtyard around which buildings are grouped should still be perceived as an entity following conversion.



Part 2: Policy Requirements

7.0 Extent of Policy Coverage

- 7.1 **Policy EC12** is the main UDP policy relating to the conversion of existing buildings in the ‘countryside’. The UDP defines countryside as *‘all that land within the County that lies outside built-up settlements and which is not allocated for development’* (Swansea UDP para 1.7.1). The built up settlements include the main urban area of Swansea and the large and small villages, as defined in policies EV17 and EV16. Any land outside these areas which is not allocated for development is, by definition, countryside and Policy EC12 will apply.

Right: Area of countryside with converted barns, Cheriton



- 7.2 The extent of the urban area and the large villages are shown on the UDP Proposals Map (Policies EV17/20/21 refer). Whilst the locations of the small villages are indicated on the Proposals Map (EV16 refers), their precise boundaries are not illustrated. The UDP does not define boundaries for small villages but facilitates judgement to be made against criteria set out in the policy. In order to establish whether a site at or on the edge of a small village lies within the village or the countryside an assessment must be made as to whether the site’s characteristics owe more to the adjoining countryside or the existing form of the small village.
- 7.3 In those cases where it is determined that the building being converted lies within a village and therefore outside the scope of Policy EC12, the criteria of Policies EV1/EV16 and EV17 will still require the conversion scheme to be appropriate to its local context and sensitively relate to existing development patterns. Proposals for demolition/redevelopment of redundant rural buildings within villages are not covered by this guidance.



8.0 Determining Suitability for Conversion

- 8.1 Those rural buildings that cannot be converted to a new use without adversely affecting the surrounding landscape will not be considered suitable for conversion. Policy EC12 outlines several criteria that must all be met before a rural building may be considered suitable for conversion, including consideration of the associated ancillary works. Clarification of these criteria is set out below:

Policy EC12 criteria:

- (i) *The building is largely intact, has a form, bulk and general design in keeping with its surroundings, and is capable of conversion without prejudicing the original character of the building or the rural character of the locality.*

A largely intact building is normally one with a structure that can be converted without significant change to its physical appearance. Surroundings refer to the countryside setting, and buildings in keeping with this are those which have a distinctly rural character, i.e. built from traditional materials with a simple but robust design. Most modern agricultural buildings, such as block built and steel framed buildings, do not fall into this category. The ability to convert a building will largely depend on the extent of remedial work needed to stabilise the structure – strengthening the roof, underpinning, etc. This work must not have a negative impact upon the original fabric and character of the building or surrounding area. Even modest alterations can detract from the character of a rural building and will not necessarily be considered appropriate.



Left: Group of farm buildings suitable for conversion

A major factor in assessing proposals for conversion will be that the appearance and structure of the building will remain as unaltered as possible, thus retaining its historic and architectural integrity.



Right: An illustration to indicate how the group of farm buildings shown in the previous photograph could be converted to retain and enhance the existing character of the buildings



Avoidance of new external brickwork and limiting the number of new window and door openings is important in retaining the character of the building. The form of the building derives from its original use in agriculture and is normally expressed in large expanses of uninterrupted tiled roof pitches, timber framing and mass brickwork/stonework that has mellowed over time. These elements give such buildings their character and should be retained as far as possible regardless of any change of use. Wherever possible existing blocked up openings should be reused. It is also important to respect the solid to void ratio of the building, i.e. the amount of solid wall in relation to openings. Any new openings should be kept to a minimum and be proportionate to the existing. Proposals that involve rebuilding in modern materials and/or cladding in stone to imitate invariably lose this character and should be avoided wherever possible. Further design guidance is set out in Appendix F.

- (ii) *The building is structurally suitable for conversion without a major or complete reconstruction, as verified by a structural stability report.*

Proposals that involve the substantial reconstruction of the original building will not be permitted under Policy EC12 as such a scheme would be tantamount to allowing new development in the countryside. Any residential scheme submitted of this nature would be considered under **Policy EV20** (New Dwellings in the Countryside) which generally presumes against such form of development. Non-residential proposals of this nature would be re-considered under Policies **EV21** (Rural Development) and **EC11** (Rural Business Development). Similarly, partial reconstruction is unlikely to be acceptable as this invariably destroys the original fabric, features and integrity of the building. Planning permission for a conversion does not allow for demolition of the original building and its replacement, even if the replacement is a replica of the original building. Some minor demolition works for



example to remove modern extensions that detract from the historic and architectural character of the original building may be acceptable. However if a building is in such a poor state of repair that it would need to be taken down to ground level or below before it could be repaired then it is unlikely to be considered suitable for conversion.

The roof structures of some farm buildings can display varying degrees of decay and damage as a result of water ingress or structural failure or fatigue. Such potential problems should be inspected, assessed and reported upon by a qualified structural engineer with experience in inspecting old and historic buildings. There will always be a presumption in favour of retaining as much of the existing fabric as possible and any proposals for roof works should reflect this presumption. Detailed guidance on repairing roofs is set out in Appendix F.

Great care must be taken to ensure that conversion work once started does not result in the collapse of the building's structure requiring rebuilding works not permitted under the original planning permission. In such circumstances it is likely that a further grant of planning permission would be required for the additional works and that reconstruction of more than 25% of external walls would be resisted under the provisions of Policy EC12. Any such rebuild scheme would be considered under new build Policy EV20 and would be unlikely to be justified other than in exceptional circumstances in the interests of agriculture, forestry or an appropriate use to serve the rural economy. For this reason applicants must submit evidence that the building is structurally sound before works commence and that development can be undertaken in accordance with the submitted plans without compromising the integrity of the original building.

Each application must therefore be accompanied by a structural stability report (also referred to as a structural appraisal report) which has been prepared by an independent professionally qualified structural engineer. The structural stability report should provide information on the existing condition of the building, demonstrate that the scheme can be implemented without major rebuild and explain how the building will be supported during construction. These support works must be undertaken/put in place prior to any work commencing on the conversion of the building. Because of the nature of the work that can be involved in the conversion of a rural building early consultation with Building Control officers is strongly recommended.



- (iii) *Safe access for pedestrians and vehicles can be provided without prejudicing the character and appearance of the area.*



Above: Barn conversion for use as holiday accommodation, Glebe Farm, Cheriton. Incorporating parking area and level access.

Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings must make provision for safe vehicular and pedestrian access. Only buildings that can accommodate such provision without capturing surrounding countryside and/or having a detrimental impact on the appearance of the countryside will be considered suitable for conversion. In order to achieve this wherever possible existing access roads and pathways should be used. Development proposals that include requirements to set back improvement lines, remove hedgerows and provide new access or visibility splays will be resisted (Policy EV12 refers). Additionally, proposals that include visually obtrusive access arrangements, such as long driveways across open fields and tarmac surfacing will not be viewed favourably. The design of any necessary works should be appropriate to the character of the area and not detract from the landscape or suburbanise the area. Furthermore, the impact of any works should be mitigated through landscaping and indigenous planting.

All proposals must also include satisfactory parking provision within the curtilage of the site. Only buildings that can accommodate an appropriate or necessary parking area without detracting from the rural setting of the building will be considered suitable for conversion. New build garages will not usually be acceptable. Ideally vehicles should be parked within an existing enclosed area or outbuilding.



- (iv) *In the case of buildings extended or constructed with the benefit of agricultural permitted development rights, these buildings have genuinely been used for the agricultural purposes they were constructed for.*

Policy EC12 seeks to prevent the construction of new agricultural and forestry buildings and extensions to existing farm and forestry buildings with the intention of early conversion to another use. Certain farm and forestry buildings can be constructed and existing buildings extended without the benefit of planning permission under permitted development rights available to agricultural and forestry uses. Further details of this determination procedure are set out in Annex A of TAN 6. However, there must be a genuine agricultural or forestry justification for such development. All planning applications for the conversion of relatively newly constructed agricultural or forestry buildings must be accompanied by evidence that the original building has been used for the intended purpose for a significant period of time, i.e. at least 10 years. The local planning authority has the power to require the removal of buildings and extensions constructed under permitted development rights which have permanently ceased to be used for agricultural or forestry purposes within 10 years from the date on which the development was substantially completed. Proposals for conversion of 'new' buildings, i.e. less than 10 years old, will therefore come under particular scrutiny. Without evidence of substantive agricultural or forestry use of a building, proposals for conversion will not normally be considered favourably. Permitted development rights should not be used in an attempt to avoid planning restrictions on new development in the countryside. The need to prevent this activity is also reflected in paragraphs 3.2.1 and 3.3.1 of TAN 6.

- (v) *Any ancillary works associated with the conversion will not unacceptably adversely affect the rural character of the locality.*



Left: Home Farm, Penrice. A commercial conversion which maintains the rural character of the area



Ancillary work is development associated with the conversion but not relating directly to the main building. Such work may include provision of amenity space, gates, fencing, car parking areas, hard surfacing, garages, outbuildings, external lighting and infrastructure related to supplying services such as electricity, water, gas and telephone lines. As with the main conversion work, it is important that ancillary work can be undertaken without unduly affecting the rural character of the area.

Certain minor works may be undertaken to a dwelling, including the development of ancillary works, without the need to apply for planning permission. Therefore, in the limited circumstances where planning permission is granted for conversion of a building to residential accommodation (including to use for holiday lets), permitted development rights will be removed by condition of the planning permission to avoid unacceptable adverse affects on the character of the original building and locality. This will require any owner to submit planning applications for future minor development proposals to ensure that they respect the original character of the building and the rural character of the locality.



Below: Stone walls providing enclosure for private space, converted barn Oxwich Green

The spaces surrounding rural buildings are generally restricted by the nature of their original use. Where a conversion requires the provision of amenity space associated with the accommodation, sufficient and unobtrusive provision must be made around the building without capturing the surrounding countryside or conflicting with the surrounding uses. The provision of adequate amenity space is particularly important for residential conversions. In instances where a residential reuse is permitted the creation of a suburban style curtilage, erection of outbuildings and other domestic paraphernalia including gates and fencing around the building should be avoided as should the subdivision of open courtyards, particularly where the courtyard serves a group of converted buildings.



The location of many rural buildings suitable for conversion may not be convenient for supplying services such as electricity, water and gas. The provision of these services, particularly associated storage containers must have minimal visual intrusion and must be clearly addressed in any planning application. Electricity line or other services should be provided underground unless demonstrated to be impracticable.

9.0 Policy Exceptions

9.1 Residential conversions in the countryside can have a detrimental effect upon the rural character of the landscape and encourage increased private car use contrary to the principles of sustainability embodied in national policy and the UDP. For these reasons national guidance, PPW (2010) and UDP Policy EC12 give priority to new uses that benefit the local economy. UDP Policy EC12 states that residential use of existing non residential buildings in the countryside will not be supported unless evidence is provided that one of the following criteria has been satisfied:

9.2 (a) *The premises have been actively marketed without success for an appropriate business use.*

PPW (2010) states that conversion to residential use should not be allowed “...unless the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure suitable business re-use and the application is supported by a statement of the efforts which have been made...” It is a potential offence under Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008 and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 for a property to be misleadingly marketed for potential business use where the ultimate intention is to try to convert to residential use.

To avoid this situation arising, all applications for the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside to residential accommodation (with the exception of holiday lets) must be subject of a comprehensive marketing exercise and be accompanied by a supporting statement to demonstrate the attempts made to market the property, as explained below:



The marketing period should last for at least 12 months from the date of the first advert and comprise of at least the following:

- Active marketing through a recognised and independent commercial property agent covering the South West Wales region.
- Notification of other organisations who may have an interest in promoting the site (e.g. City & County of Swansea Economic Regeneration Section).
- A minimum of three adverts at two-monthly intervals in a regional newspaper such as the Western Mail or the South Wales Evening Post.
- Written notification to the local planning authority of the commencement of the marketing period, including details of the commercial property agent.

It must be demonstrated through a supporting statement accompanying an application that genuine attempts have been made to market the property for a range of uses that would contribute to the local economy, including appropriate sustainable rural employment initiatives, tourist accommodation, recreation, small-scale tourism activity, farm shop, etc. The supporting statement should include evidence of:

- The extent of the marketing, including copies of all adverts (with dates), and details of when and for how long the advert was in the agent's window, website hits, etc.
- The price at which the property has been marketed (which should reasonably reflect its value as a business premises)
- Written details from the commercial property agent of any enquiries received, including any firm offers (conditional or unconditional), and
- A written statement of the commercial property agent's view as to the commercial viability of the site.

(b) Residential use is ancillary to a business reuse of premises

In some situations ancillary residential accommodation may be acceptable where it supports a business reuse of the building. UDP Policy EC12 would support such proposals provided it is clear that the residential use is subordinate to a viable business reuse. Such applications will be required to be accompanied by objective information assessing:

- the functional need for a dwelling for a full time worker, **(i.e. a functional and time test)**, and
- a business case demonstrating that the enterprise is likely be financially sustainable **(i.e. a financial test)**, and



- evidence that the business needs to be established at the proposed location and that it cannot be accommodated at another suitable site where a dwelling is likely to be available (**i.e. other dwellings test**) .
- other **normal planning requirements test**, to demonstrate that the dwelling is suitably located to fulfil its identified need and to minimise impact on the wider environment.

Further guidance on these tests is set out in Appendix C

Proposed business uses considered to fall within the scope of this policy are forestry, agriculture and related services, fishing, sustainable tourism and low impact recreational activity. This type of conversion may be particularly appropriate where a second dwelling is proposed on an established farm which is financially sustainable to facilitate the handover of the management of the farm business to a younger farmer.

In order to ensure compliance with this criterion the grant of any planning permission will include a condition requiring the works necessary for the establishment of the enterprise to have been completed before the residential part is occupied. In addition, a condition tying occupation of the residential accommodation to the operation of the enterprise must be imposed in order to prevent this element being sold separately. Alternatively a planning obligation may be sought to link the residential use with the business.

- (c) *The resulting residential use will contribute to an identified local need for housing or for affordable housing in the location concerned*

Residential reuse of an existing rural building may be acceptable where it would contribute to an identified local need for housing or for affordable housing in the location concerned. This criterion links with **UDP Policy EV18 ‘Local Needs Affordable Housing’** (detailed in Appendix D) which specifies the circumstances in which the provision of affordable housing in rural areas may be permitted.

Policy EV18 primarily directs affordable housing in rural areas to the small and large villages identified in Policies EV16 and EV17. However, the policy recognises that there may occasionally be potential for such provision through the conversion of existing non residential buildings adjoining these settlements. Any such proposals would be subject to compliance with the criteria set out in Policies EV18 and EC12.



Local need for housing and affordable housing in a locality must be proven by reference to latest local Housing Market/Needs Assessments and the prior opinion of the Director of Regeneration and Housing must also be sought. Any accommodation provided through a conversion scheme should remain affordable in perpetuity, be designed to meet the needs identified and be of an appropriate scale.

Affordable housing will be directed towards meeting the needs of the following categories of people, as identified in TAN2 (Planning and Affordable Housing, 2006):
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan2>

- (i) Existing residents needing separate accommodation in the area, for example, married couples and people living in tied accommodation on retirement,*
- (ii) People whose work provides important services and who need to live closer to the local community,*
- (iii) People who are not necessarily resident locally but have long standing links with the local community, for example elderly people who need to move back to a village to be near relatives, and*
- (iv) People with the offer of a job in the locality, who cannot take up the offer because of lack of affordable housing*



Part 3: Submitting a Planning Application

10.0 Planning Application Forms

- 10.1 Planning application forms and pre-enquiry forms are available from the Civic Centre, Oystermouth Road, Swansea SA1 3SN or to download from the Council's website: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=24914>
- 10.2 Guidance notes explaining the information required to be submitted in support of the planning application are issued with the forms and also are available to download from the above address.
- 10.3 Planning applications can be submitted either in hard copy format or electronically via the Planning Portal <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>

11.0 Design and Access Statements

- 11.1 In accordance with legislation, and as set out in UDP Policy EV1, Design and Access Statements (DAS) will be required in support of planning applications for the conversion of rural buildings unless the proposed change of use does not involve operational development. The DAS should explain: how the development complies with the UDP and relevant SPG; expand on the design concepts employed; and demonstrate how the development will fit in with its surroundings. Advice and guidance notes relating to the contents of Design and Access Statements can be found on the Council's website:
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=30332>

12.0 Additional Information Required

- 12.1 All planning applications for the conversion of rural buildings must be accompanied by a structural stability report. This must be prepared by an independent structural engineer. The report should include information on the existing condition of the building and demonstrate that the proposed scheme is realistic and the rural building is capable of conversion without unacceptable rebuilding.
- 12.2 Buildings constructed on the basis of agricultural permitted development rights within 10 years of the date of the application for conversion must provide evidence that the building has been used for the intended purpose for a significant period of time.



- 12.3 Applications for residential re-use must submit at least one of the following:
- A supporting statement to demonstrate that genuine attempts have been made to market the property for a use that would benefit the rural economy (see 9.2a).
 - An objective assessment of the functional and time need for the dwelling, the financial sustainability of the business enterprise it is to support, and to demonstrate that there are no other dwellings or buildings that could not meet any established functional need (see 9.2b).
 - Evidence of proven need in the locality (see 9.2c)
- 12.4 Rural buildings are highly likely to be roosting or breeding places for protected species, such as owls and bats and a survey for protected species should therefore accompany all conversion applications. Any conversion scheme must abide by the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Part III of the CROW Act 2000. The advice of the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) or the Council's ecologist should be sought before commencing any preparation work and the presence of any protected species will be a material consideration in the determination of the application. Any proposal that may result in unmitigated harm to the species or its habitat is unlikely to be considered favourably.

13.0 Additional Consents

- 13.1 If the original building is listed or lies within the curtilage of a listed building, Listed Building Consent will be required for any conversion work. Listed Building Consent application forms and guidance notes are available from the Civic Centre, Swansea or to download from: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=24914>. The Listed Building Consent process is similar to the planning application process and the two applications should be submitted at the same time either in hard copy format or electronically via the planning portal <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>
- 13.2 If the Council on the advice of Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, believe that important remains exist at the site, developers may be required to submit an archaeological and /or field investigation. This must be undertaken prior to the determination of any planning application. Further guidance is provided by UDP **Policy EV6**.



14.0 Building Regulations

- 14.1 The conversion of a rural building to a different use to which it was originally intended will in most cases require building regulations approval in addition to planning consent. Comprehensive information on building regulations can be found at the planning portal
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/>
- 14.2 Any works to the fabric of the building including demolition and rebuilding works, insertion of windows, roof lights and flues/chimney stacks, required as part of building regulations approval which do not form part of the plans and conditions approved as part of any planning permission may be unauthorised and may be unacceptable in planning terms. The local planning authority must be consulted and any necessary consent obtained before carrying out additional works required by building regulations.



Swansea Unitary Development Plan Objectives and Strategic Policies**Objectives**

- 1.b** To promote locally distinct, innovative design sensitive to the location and setting
- 1.c** To protect the countryside from development that would cause material harm
- 1.g** To conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment
- 1.j** To prevent any significant adverse environmental impacts related to new development
- 1.m** To promote resource efficient buildings and layouts in all new development
- 2.g** To provide sustainable employment opportunities for rural communities
- 2.h** To improve, expand and diversify tourism infrastructure
- 2.i** To develop sustainable tourism initiatives and improves the quality and range of the accommodation base
- 3.i** To promote inclusive design in all new developments
- 5.a** To support development in safe and accessible locations
- 5.b** To reduce the need to travel and reduce reliance on the private car

Strategic objectives

- SP1** To pursue sustainable development as an integral principle of the planning and development process
- SP2** To protect and conserve the countryside and village character
- SP3** To protect and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage of the County and safeguard it from materially harmful development
- SP4** To develop or improve the variety and quality of tourism facilities where they contribute to the growth of the local economy and where they do not have a significant impact on natural heritage and the historic environment or the amenity of local communities
- SP8** To improve the range of sports and leisure facilities, the tourism portfolio and enhance sustainable countryside recreation opportunities



APPENDIX B

Swansea UDP Policy EC12: Conversion of Existing Rural Buildings**Policy EC12**

The conversion of existing buildings in the countryside to new uses that contribute to the local economy and the extensions of such buildings will be permitted where:

- (i) The building is largely intact, has a form, bulk and general design in keeping with its surroundings, and is capable of conversion without prejudicing the original character of the building or the rural character of the locality,**
- (ii) The building is structurally suitable for conversion without a major or complete reconstruction, as verified by a structural stability report,**
- (iii) Safe access for pedestrians and vehicles can be provided without prejudicing the character and appearance of the area,**
- (iv) In the case of buildings extended or constructed with the benefit of agricultural permitted development rights, these buildings have genuinely been used for the agricultural purposes they were constructed for, and**
- (v) Any ancillary works associated with the conversion will not unacceptably adversely affect the rural character of the locality.**

Except for proposals solely for the provision of tourist accommodation, residential use of existing non residential buildings in the countryside will not be supported unless evidence is provided that:

- (a) The premises have actively been marketed without success for appropriate business use, or**
- (b) Residential use is ancillary to a business reuse of premises, or**
- (c) The resulting residential use will contribute to an identified local need for housing or for affordable housing in the location concerned.**

Main Cross References: SP1, SP3, EV1, EV3, EV12, EV14, EV18-22, EV25-26, EV34, EV40, EC11, EC14, EC17-19, R9-10

National Planning Guidance: PPW; TANs 5 and 6

SPG: Gower Management Plan; Swansea Countryside Strategy; Use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings for Southern Lliw Valley; Promoting Swansea's Natural Environment: A Local Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.



Amplification

2.5.7 New uses that contribute to the local economy include appropriate sustainable rural employment initiatives, tourist accommodation, recreation, small-scale tourism activities and farm shops. Such uses are preferred to residential conversions as they contribute to the local economy and provide employment. Conversions of buildings to provide tourist accommodation will need to satisfy the requirements set out in Policies EC18 and EC19. Such schemes will be subject to appropriate planning conditions to restrict the use of the building for tourist accommodation only.

2.5.8 Where a residential use is proposed, a supporting statement will be required to accompany a planning application to demonstrate the efforts made to secure a business use. This statement will need to indicate the extent and length of time over which the marketing initiative has been undertaken. An identified local need for housing is one which meets the requirements of Policy EV20 criterion (i) and paragraph 1.6.16.

2.5.9 Where a building extended or constructed with the benefit of agricultural permitted development rights is proposed to be converted, the history of the building will be investigated to ensure that it has been genuinely used for agricultural purposes. Evidence to this effect should accompany any planning application. If it has not been used for the purposes for which it was intended, planning permission for conversion will not normally be granted. Permitted development rights are granted to meet farming and forestry needs and not for purposes of diversification. They should not be used to try to avoid the planning restrictions on new buildings in the open countryside.

2.5.10 The presence of a protected species roosting or breeding in the building is a material consideration that must be taken into account when considering any proposed development that may result in harm to the species or its habitat. Applicants should therefore have regard to the requirements of relevant European and UK legislation, as outlined in PPW as well as Swansea's Local Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.



APPENDIX C**TAN 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities - Sustainable Rural Enterprise Dwelling Appraisals (pp21-22):****“4.8 Functional test**

4.8.1 A *functional test* is necessary to establish whether it is essential, for the proper functioning of the enterprise, for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. It should relate to unexpected situations that might arise, for which workers are needed to be on hand outside of normal working hours for the particular enterprise. Such requirements might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand night and day to deal with an emergency that would threaten the continued viability and existence of the enterprise without immediate attention. Where there are existing dwelling(s) on the enterprise then the need for additional workers to live on the site for the proper functioning of the enterprise must be demonstrated to be essential.

4.9 Time test

4.9.1 If a functional requirement is established, it will then be necessary to consider the number of workers needed to meet it, for which the scale and nature of the enterprise will be relevant. Where there is currently no dwelling associated with the rural enterprise the worker for whom there is a functional need for new accommodation must be a full-time worker. With the exception of second dwellings on established farms, it must not relate to a part-time requirement, or a requirement that does not relate to the enterprise. If this is a second (or further) dwelling, all existing dwellings must also be occupied by full-time workers for whom it is essential that they also remain on site for functional reasons, or by workers and their dependents last employed in a rural enterprise. (See exceptions at paragraphs 4.5.1 - 4.5.3).

4.10 Financial test

4.10.1 The rural enterprise and the activity concerned should be financially sound and should have good prospects of remaining economically sustainable for a reasonable period of time, usually at least 5 years.

4.10.2 Evidence of actual or potential economic performance will be required. To assess economic sustainability it will be necessary to show the business has a reasonable prospect of providing a market return for all operators for the amount of management and manual labour inputs, including the job for which the rural enterprise dwelling is being sought, for at least five years from the anticipated completion of the proposed development. This should be assessed on the basis of what is a realistic income for the skills of the operator. A financial test is also necessary to assess the size of dwelling which the enterprise can afford to build and maintain. Dwellings which are unusually large in relation to the needs of the enterprise, or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long-term, should not be permitted. It is the requirements of the enterprise rather than of



the owner or occupier which are relevant to determining the size of dwelling that is appropriate.

4.10.3 There may be some cases in which the planning circumstances of the site are such that, if a new permanent dwelling is approved, it will be appropriate for the planning authority to consider making permission subject to a condition removing some of the permitted development rights for development within the curtilage of a dwelling house. For example, proposed extensions could result in a dwelling whose size exceeded what could be justified by the functional requirement, and affect the continued viability of maintaining the property for its intended use given the income which the enterprise can sustain. However, such conditions should only restrict or remove the availability of such specific permitted development rights as are relevant to the circumstances, rather than to be drafted in terms which withdraw all those in a Class.

4.11 Other dwelling test

4.11.1 Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that there is no other dwelling(s) or buildings suitable for conversion, which are available to meet the need. If there are existing dwelling(s) on the enterprise it needs to be shown why these cannot be used to meet the needs of the enterprise for a resident worker, and why labour or residential arrangements cannot be re-organised to ensure that the existing accommodation meets the needs of the enterprise without the need for a further dwelling.

4.11.2 In cases where the planning authority is particularly concerned about possible abuse, it may be helpful to investigate the history of the enterprise to establish the recent pattern of use of land and buildings and whether, for example, any dwellings or buildings suitable for conversion to dwellings have recently been sold. Such a sale could constitute evidence of lack of need.

4.12 Other planning requirements test

4.12.1 Rural enterprise dwellings should satisfy the usual planning requirements in terms of design, sustainability and access. The siting of the proposed dwelling should relate closely to the activities for which there is a need. In most cases this will mean that the new dwelling should be sited in close proximity to existing buildings and in the case of dwellings for agricultural enterprises, should not be isolated from the farmstead or in locations that could encourage farm fragmentation. Local planning authorities should resist planning applications for rural enterprise dwellings that are prominent in the landscape.

4.12.2 Careful consideration needs to be given to minimising the environmental effects of new rural enterprise dwellings. Opportunities to generate on site power and heat should be explored. Particular attention needs to be given to the avoidance of impacts on ground and surface water, as in most cases, it will not be possible to connect to mains drainage."



Swansea UDP Policy EV18: Local Needs Affordable Housing**Policy EV18**

In exceptional circumstances permission may be granted for the development of small sites within and adjoining settlements. This would be for the specific purpose of providing affordable housing to meet an existing deficiency for people who need to live in the locality and who cannot reasonably be accommodated through the area's general housing market.

Such releases will only be made where:

- (i) There is proven need in the locality,**
- (ii) There are binding agreements to make the housing available for low cost purchase or rent, and for the retention of the housing in the long term as low cost housing to meet local needs,**
- (iii) It has a design that in its form, elevational treatment, detailing and use of materials is sympathetic to the architectural character of the village,**
- (iv) It will not involve the loss of land of important recreational, natural heritage or amenity value,**
- (v) The scale of the development is in accord with the character of the area, and**
- (vi) No satisfactory alternative arrangements can be made to meet the identified needs.**

Main Cross References: SP1-3, EV1-2, EV16-17, EV20, EV34-36, EV39, EC12-13, HC1, HC3, HC17

National Planning Guidance: PPW; TAN 2

SPG: Local Housing Market/Needs Assessment



Amplification

1.6.9 This policy refers primarily to the villages identified in Policies EV16 and EV17 and is intended to help sustain local communities. For the purposes of this policy, “within” refers to EV16 villages, while “adjoining” refers to larger EV17 villages. It is important to stress that releases under this “exceptions” policy are not expected to be extensive or numerous and that in all cases confirmation of need will be required to be demonstrated. Scurlage in particular has the potential to provide local needs affordable housing on land adjacent to the health centre, and any such development should be used to bring about improvements to the character of this settlement. There may occasionally be potential for other small rural settlements to provide opportunities for local needs affordable housing subject to compliance with all the policy criteria.

1.6.10 In the County’s rural areas, particularly Gower and Mawr, the price of housing has risen to levels well beyond the reach of many local people seeking to enter the housing market for the first time. Consequently younger people are being forced to secure accommodation elsewhere and move away from their villages of birth. This process can in turn have an undesirable impact on the age structure and vitality of a settlement.

1.6.11 This policy links with Policy HC3, which deals with affordable housing within the urban area. The forthcoming SPG on Local Housing Market/Needs Assessments will establish the nature and level of housing requirements in the local housing market, including the need and demand for affordable and market housing across both the urban and rural areas.

1.6.12 In the meantime, in order to assess the need for affordable housing in a particular location, the comments of the Director of Regeneration and Housing will be sought for any development proposals which merit consideration. Affordable housing will be directed towards meeting the needs of the following categories of people as identified in TAN2:

- (i) Existing residents needing separate accommodation in the area, for example, married couples and people living in tied accommodation on retirement;
- (ii) People whose work provides important services and who need to live closer to the local community;
- (iii) People who are not necessarily resident locally but have long standing links with the local community, for example elderly people who need to move back to a village to be near relatives; and
- (iv) People with the offer of a job in the locality, who cannot take up the offer because of lack of affordable housing.



APPENDIX E

List Of Competent Persons To Provide Structural Stability Report:

The Council does not have an approved list of structural engineers; however the following companies are currently used by the building control officers to validate any structural stability reports submitted:

Dean and Thomas
Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers
Abernethy House
50 Walter Road
Swansea
SA1 5PW
Tel (01792) 483060

Mel Williams Partnership
20 Ar Y Bryn
Pembrey
Burry Port
Dyfed
SA16 0AX
Tel (01554)832169



Design Guidelines

The design guidelines applicable to rural building conversion are largely the same throughout the County. Therefore the conversions guidance included within the forthcoming Design Guide for the Gower AONB is replicated below to ensure that conversion proposals within other rural areas of the County are dealt with in a consistent manner.

General Principles

- a. Proposals will need to ascertain the suitability of building to be converted for the proposed use and whether it is likely to need structural and/or remedial work to stabilise the structure e.g. underpinning foundations or before strengthening roof structure. Such work should not have a negative impact upon the character of the building.
- b. The building should be capable of conversion without prejudicing the original character of the building or rural character of the locality. It should remain largely intact, retain its form, and its design should be in keeping with its surroundings.
- c. The scale and massing of the existing building should be respected and external alterations kept to a minimum.
- d. A sense of the building's original overall volume should be retained internally as well as externally. The insertion of additional floors within the existing structure may not always be an acceptable approach, particularly if the building is listed.
- e. A building's setting may be as important to the local character as the structure itself. If proposals include converting a group of buildings the scheme should retain existing relationships between the buildings and common spaces such as courtyards.

Openings

- a. The existing openings should be used to accommodate doors, windows and screens wherever possible. Re-opening previously blocked up openings may also be an appropriate way of introducing more light into a building. Existing sources of light should be maximised.
- b. New openings should be kept to a minimum and the proportions of existing openings should be used as a basis for design of new ones.
- c. Windows should have an appropriate depth of reveal (the distance set back in the wall). Reveals are generally relatively deep within older traditional buildings and provide attractive shadows which add interest to an elevation.



Roofs

- a. The existing roof structure and shape should be retained where possible. Roof pitches should not be altered as this can have a negative impact upon the building's form.
- b. Existing slates should be kept and re-used where possible. Replacements should match with existing, both in terms of colour, texture and pattern.
- c. Alternative roof finishes may be appropriate particularly on commercial schemes or more contemporary residential conversions, subject to detailing and context.

Doors

- a. Doors in conversions should be limited to simple styles and detailing, and should fit the existing opening. The infilling of an opening in order to fit a door should be avoided.

Windows

- a. If windows are required to light an upper floor, their design should be appropriate to the existing building. The incorporation of internal light wells and atria with ridge roof lighting can assist in getting natural light deep into the heart of a building.
- b. The introduction of dormer windows is rarely an acceptable approach when converting a building unless they are an existing feature, due to the impact upon the character and form of the original building. Rooflights should be considered as an alternative.
- c. The choice of style of window should reflect the style and characteristics of the existing building. The window should fit the opening rather than vice versa, as such standard or 'off the shelf' windows will rarely be acceptable.
- d. The use of uPVC windows will not be accepted for converted buildings as often these are older, traditional properties which may be of some architectural or historic interest, even if not protected through being listed.
- e. Care should be taken with the subdivision and proportions of windows, which should be appropriate to the building type rather than its new use.
- f. Large openings provide the opportunity for the inclusion of attractive/strong design elements. The detailing of such openings should aim to retain the openness of the original building and, as such, any sub-division by frames should be minimal.

Features and Services

- a. Buildings should not be 'domesticated' through the introduction of inappropriate detailing or features such as porches or conservatories.
- b. Considerable care needs to be given to both siting and detailing when incorporating chimneys, flues or ventilation systems.



- External masonry chimneys will rarely be an acceptable addition to any conversion.
 - Insulated metal flues should be used instead as these can be housed within the building, minimising visual impact. Such flues should be finished in a dark recessive colour.
- c Any necessary bulky plant should be sited on the least visible side of the building or, preferably, within the building itself.
 - d External pipework should be kept to a minimum. Generally, all foul water drainage should be incorporated within the building, with external soil vent pipes being in a dark/recessive colour.
 - e Gutters and down pipes should be of a style and material appropriate to the building, with existing/ traditional fixing details being used. The use of uPVC rainwater goods should be avoided.
 - f Existing ridge and eaves detailing should be retained or reinstated where possible and the introduction of timber fascias and bargeboards will not be acceptable on agricultural conversions regardless of material, as they are not typical detailing.

External Detailing

- a. Any landscape scheme should avoid domesticated detailing - simple planting schemes, traditional boundary treatments and hard surfaces will be most appropriate. If lawns and planting are to be incorporated, they should be simple and sensitive to the character of the building.
- b. Where a conversion consists of a number of units, a common treatment should be applied to external spaces in order that the building reads as a single entity.
- c. The siting of outbuildings including garages and sheds will need to be controlled to respect the existing building's character. Wherever possible, such uses should be incorporated within the existing building. When not viable, these structures should be sited away from the building in the least visually obtrusive part of a site. Appropriate measures should be taken to screen any visually intrusive structures, preferably using planting, if appropriate, landform and natural materials.



Commercial and Contemporary Conversions

- a. On commercial properties, roller shutter and security style doors should be avoided, with side hung, timber or metal panel doors being a more acceptable approach.
- b. Commercial schemes will need to consider the potential impact of access and storage arrangements upon the character of both the site and wider area. If there is more than one commercial unit, boundaries should be well defined and a maintenance regime should form part of any tenancy agreement. Screened bin storage should be provided for each unit.



References

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City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan, City and County of Swansea Council, November 2008

Planning Policy Wales Edition 2, Welsh Assembly Government, June 2010

Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities, Welsh Assembly Government, July 2010

A Design Guide for the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Supplementary planning Guidance , 2011

Planning for Community Safety. Supplementary Planning Guidance. (Forthcoming)

Lighting Scheme Guidance for Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Supplementary planning Guidance 2010





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