

LANDBANKING POLICY

1. Introduction

Albyn Housing Society has an agreed Asset Management strategy that identifies the strategic objectives that underpin its development activities including our strategy for growth. In most cases we will acquire sites specific to housing developments that have been identified in our Development Programme and which are included in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) prepared by the Highland Council. We recognise that sites may become available in advance of specific proposals being made, or sites may be available where their delivery is outside our immediate growth plans. We recognise that such opportunities, in areas of known demand, provide for a longer term growth strategy. This policy sets out our approach when a site becomes available unexpectedly, either by being offered to the Society or being identified as available.

1.2 This policy has been prepared to take account, in particular, the following performance standards for Registered Social Landlords:

- GS1.2 (Policies and Procedures); GS1.4 (Resource Management);
- Activity Standard AS3.1 (Responsiveness to Service users) and 3.2 (Information and Advice)

2. Purpose of Policy

This policy has been prepared to set out the circumstances in which Albyn will acquire sites for landbanking. For the purposes of this policy, landbanking is defined as the acquisition of a site for future housing development where detailed proposals have yet to be developed and approved. This policy is also intended to be applied where the Society is offered vacant properties.

3. Objectives

This policy is intended to ensure that we can

- Support Neighbourhoods and Communities to thrive
- Providing access to housing and support in our area of operation
- Take a longer term approach to meeting our strategic objectives
- Respond positively to initiatives by landowners and developers, where their objectives accord with ours
- Respond positively to funding opportunities
- To provide future continuity for our development programme
- Make good use of our reserves and protect our assets.

4.0 Site Availability

4.1 We recognise that potential sites for landbanking may become available by the following routes:

- Direct offer to sell by the current owner
- The Society being made aware that a site is being placed on the open market

- Site being offered to the Society by a developer
- Public bodies offering sites for sale
- Sites being offered to the Society by Community Trusts
- Sites being offered by the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) or the Highland Housing Alliance (HHA)

We will respond to opportunities in the context of this policy

5.0 Acquiring Sites

5.1 We will only acquire sites (or parts of sites) for landbanking where we are satisfied that:

- The site has the potential to be developed to meet our objectives and identified priorities of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS)
- Where not already zoned for housing in the Local Development Plan, we have Planning in Principle as a minimum prior to acquisition
- The price is reasonable, based on known site conditions (site investigations undertaken as deemed necessary), and does not exceed the valuation as received from an independent valuer
- We are not putting the Society's assets at risk as a result of the acquisition

6.0 Assessing Potential

6.1 We are unlikely to acquire a site for future development in an area which neither the LHS or our own assessments has identified existing or projected housing need.

The only exception to this would be where there is a known change to an area – for example an incoming or expanding employer which will alter the demand in the future.

6.2 Where a Housing Needs Assessment undertaken by ourselves, or others, identifies a need we will proactively work ourselves, and with others, to identify a suitable site in that community. Where no sites are immediately available, we will work to establish constructive relationships with land owners and other owners to ensure that, should they decide to sell, they will consider reaching an appropriate arrangement with us.

6.3 To determine whether a site has the potential to be developed to meet our objectives, we will consult the Local Plan and we will carry out an assessment of the site, in line with our **site assessment checklist**. This assessment will include establishing with the relevant authorities whether the site has, or is likely to secure

- Planning consent for housing
- Access to water, drainage and sewerage infrastructure
- Appropriate access to utilities (electric, gas (where available) and telecommunications)
- Appropriate access to the site

6.4 If there is any doubt over the provision of these services, utilities or access or if there is a likelihood of unfavourable ground conditions or unacceptable risk of flooding, we are unlikely to proceed.

6.5 We will seek to ensure that the site has the potential to be developed in accordance with the principles of our sustainability policy.

6.6 We recognise that sites may be offered by landowners, who may wish to have some influence over the types of housing provided on the site. We will seek to accommodate reasonable conditions that are imposed at the time the offer is made which are consistent with our objectives and charitable status. If a seller proposes conditions that are unacceptable, whether they have the potential to contradict our objectives and charitable status, or adversely affect valuation of the site and our ability to develop it, or do not reflect the housing needs identified in the area, we will not proceed with the acquisition.

In appropriate circumstances, we may suggest that the seller contact the HHA or the HSCHT.

7 Purchasing a Site

7.1 In the event of a site becoming available that we do not have specific plans for, but which we believe has the potential to be developed to meet the Association's objectives, we will seek an independent valuation. Where the site is too large for our immediate proposals, we will consider purchasing the whole site and landbanking the surplus for the future, in accordance with this policy.

7.2 We will not agree to purchase a site above the valuation set by the independent valuer.

7.3 We will always seek funding for the acquisition of a site for landbanking

7.4 We will consider funding the purchase (in whole or in part) from the Society's reserves if grant is not available from the Scottish Government or the Highland Council Landbank fund. We will only do this if we are satisfied that we are not putting the Society's Assets at risk. In such cases we will seek to recover the acquisition costs at the time when the scheme is being developed, as part of the overall scheme costs. Such purchases would be subject to Board approval

7.5 We will always seek to minimise pre-acquisition costs but this will not be at the expense of a comprehensive and thorough feasibility of the site and its potential for development. We will seek to recover all eligible costs as part of the overall scheme costs. To facilitate this, we will maintain a comprehensive record of costs incurred.

Should there be reference in here to the feasibility funding limit?

Prepare a site specific inspection and maintenance plan. Inspection regularity to be agreed with COW.

8 Working with Partners

If we are unable to obtain grant funding and do not have sufficient reserves to fund the acquisition, we will notify the Highland Council, HHA and HSCHT in order that they may consider acquiring the site.

9 Developing Specific Proposals

Where we acquire a site and landbank it, we will identify a proposed development timeframe within a year. A land banked opportunity will not adversely affect existing plans that have been agreed previously. It is not its intention to disrupt and disadvantage plans and proposals for meeting identified housing needs.

10 Implementation of this Policy

Lead responsibility for implementing this policy rest with the Asset Management and Investment Manager with the day to day operation sitting with the Investment Officers.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy was approved by the Committee/Board in xxxx. This policy will be reviewed not later than May ~~2021~~2022.