

Bridgend Local Development Plan

2006-2021



Bridgend Local Development Plan

Examination

<http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/ldpexamination>

Tuesday 20 November 2012 10:00am

Session 1 – Strategy

Bridgend County Borough Council's Rebuttal Statement

Qn2e Does the Sustainability Appraisal and other supporting information demonstrate that environmental considerations have suitably informed the regeneration strategy notwithstanding the omission of such a reference from the listed considerations at paragraph 2.3.11?

The Countryside Council for Wales raise the issue of the 'environmental protection adequacy' of the SA in their response, as they did at the deposit stage consultation. The Council considers that issue is addressed in Appendix 7 of the SA report (SD10).

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal consultants, Peter Brett Associates (formerly Baker Associates) have provided an additional response on this issue, which is attached at Appendix A.

Qn2f.

(i) Why do Policies REG1 and SP9 provide for as much as 153ha of employment land?

The Welsh Government response states that it "*would be beneficial if only land allocated for development were included in policies*".

The Council have continued its approach, adopted in the Bridgend Unitary Development Plan, that all employment land is identified, even if it is developed. This gives a simple, flexible approach in that, in one policy (REG1), land to be protected for employment purposes is identified and new employment is allocated (and protected in the future). This makes the application of other policies in the Plan (notably REG2 and REG3) easier to apply. Table 3.1 of the LDP provides a strategic breakdown of vacant employment land; Appendix 3 gives a detailed breakdown by policy allocation.

This approach in Bridgend County Borough has worked well for many years and there is no practical reason why it should be changed and takes account of, in policy terms, very often substantial premises that may

become vacant and/or redeveloped where extensive demolition has or will take place.

- (ii) Does that high level of employment provision have implications for the amount of housing provision given that the Cambridge Econometrics Report concluded that economic growth would be reduced and that fewer households would be created as a result?**

The Welsh Government states that *"while the CE Report concludes that employment growth is not expected to be as strong as previously projected, it is important that there is some correlation between the amount of employment land and the projected growth in population and housing"*

NLP on behalf of Redrow Homes states that: *"there is a significant misalignment between an economic strategy planning for growth and a housing strategy planning for economic decline"*.

The representors have not taken the data from the CE report in the correct context. The employment projections are not planning for decline; rather they are planning for economic recovery. Table 3.1 of the CE report shows that from 2008 – 2012 there was projected to be a significant decline in employment (-1.7% pa). However, for the rest of the remaining 9 years of the plan period up to 2021, employment is expected to grow by up to 0.6%pa.

Table 3.2 of the CE report also shows the sectoral change in employment over the plan period. A strong shift away from manufacturing towards financial and business services is predicted. On a comparative basis, the sectoral projections in the CE report indicate growth in employment in financial & business services in Bridgend, which will be greater than in any of the neighbouring areas and so such employment within the sub-region will become increasingly concentrated in Bridgend as a result; thereby contributing to the LDP Vision.

This sectoral shift will require different types of employment accommodation from the sectors which have seen a decline and therefore it is important that the Council provides a wide portfolio of new largely unconstrained sites to accommodate this growth.

It should also be noted that the characteristics of this recession has been that, although there has been business failures, the preference (where practicable) has been for rationalisation; laying off some staff and reverting to part-time working on order to retain skills, 'ride' out the recession and prepare for the upturn.

In employment land-use terms, although there are currently more vacant buildings and under-utilisation of premises on existing sites, these are sporadic, and there are no vast swathes of derelict and redundant land, necessitating a further wholesale review, other than has taken place as

part of the Employment Land Review, which has taken account of these changing circumstances.

- (iv) If employment land provision substantially exceeds likely demand, could that risk substantial non-delivery and uncertainty in relation to the allocated sites including delivery of the mixed use sites and the regeneration-led spatial strategy?**

The Welsh Government states that: *"there needs to be a detailed assessment of all employment allocations to ensure that they are viable, free from constraints and deliverable within the plan period"*

NLP on behalf of Redrow Homes states that *"our representations raised concern relating to the deliverability of several allocated sites given that many are long-standing allocations which have been unable to come forward due to issues of viability. Coupled with this, we also raised concern that the location of some of the proposed sites will not be attractive to the market"*.

The Council would refer the Welsh Government to its Employment Land Review (SD117) which carried out this detailed assessment of all employment allocations. The results of which have been carried forward into the deposit LDP. As outlined in its examination statement the Council's approach to its long standing vacant employment sites has been to be proactive in seeking to change their mix of uses in order to bring forward development which will 'enable' and facilitate employment development.

The original NLP representation does not outline which sites the representor has concerns with. They raise the issue that, other than Pencoed Technology Park and Bocam Park, the south east of the County Borough has no other employment provision.

Notwithstanding the fact that the 5.4Ha allocated at Pencoed Technology Park (within Bridgend County Borough) forms part of a much wider (18ha) employment site in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the Council would suggest that the 6.88ha at Bridgend Industrial Estate and 11.29ha at Waterton Industrial Estate (as well as Brocastle) together, more than adequately supply employment land opportunities in the South East of the County Borough.

- Qn2g Housing need and supply will be considered at tomorrow's session. However if some Representors are correct in saying that additional housing allocations should be made to bring the housing supply figure closer to the 11,000 figure in the Welsh Government Household Projections plus a margin for non-delivery, is there scope to maintain a similar proportion of housing supply within the SRGAs such that the spatial strategy would be maintained?**

Boyer Planning states that *"At present there is a lack of growth outside of the SRGAs and a lack of deliverable land identified within the SRGAs...the key consideration should not be whether land is either inside or outside the SRGA's rather whether it is deliverable"*

The Council agrees with the statement that there is a lack of growth outside of the Strategic Regeneration Growth Areas, as this is the result of the spatial strategy of the plan. Whilst the deliverability of housing sites within the SRGAs will be debated in Session 2, the Council are concerned that representor's are adopting an 'allocations anywhere' approach which will dilute the regenerative aspirations of the plan to concentrate development where it is most needed in order to create additional benefits.

Boyer Planning states that: *"Policy SP1 places an unrealistic reliance on delivery of new housing within the valley communities"*

NLP state that: *"It is considered that the Council's aspirations to regenerate areas such as Maesteg and the valley communities are more likely to be delivered if the main centres act as economic drivers for the sub area. It is unrealistic to expect the more fragile areas to lead the recovery from recession"*

The Council is not expecting Maesteg and the Valley communities to 'lead' the areas recovery from recession. Whilst Maesteg is identified as a SRGA, it is relatively small in scale and reflects the towns status in the Wales Spatial Plan and its ability to accommodate a reasonable amount of growth to assist in positively regenerating the area. Table 3.1 of the plan confirms that the Maesteg SRGA (the only SRGA in the Valleys area) is accommodating 7% of the residential development and 10% of the vacant employment land allocated in the plan.

Boyer Planning states that: *"Furthermore, we object to the limitations placed on the settlement of Bridgend to accommodate further growth"*.

The Council would respond to this by stating that, using the data in COM1, COM2 and REG1; 49% (3,584 units) of the allocated housing in the LDP is within the settlement of Bridgend; 51% (42.8ha) of non-Strategic vacant employment land is within the town.

Boyer Planning states as a minimum the Plan should seek to be in accordance with the Wales Spatial Plan.

The Council considers that the Plan is in accordance with the Wales Spatial Plan. Bridgend will be 'successful in its own right' and be an 'attractive place to work, live and visit'; these are component parts of the vision however. Key to this is the regeneration led strategy adopted in the LDP. Rather than just an economic / market-led approach, which emphasises the need to regenerate the County Borough by developing those sites identified in the Plan; it will not be achieved by additional wholesale urban sprawl.

Qn 2j Will the Council's intended preparation of an online LDP site database as part of the Annual Monitoring Report suitably address the Welsh Government concerns about the lack of clarity of delivery of the Strategy and especially the linkages between Table 3.1, Policies COM1 and COM2, paragraph 6.1.5 and the PLA1 settlement hierarchy?

The Welsh Government states that more information would be required from the Council to demonstrate how the online LDP Site database would relate to and indicate whether the strategy is being delivered.

The Council considers that the monitoring framework outlined in Chapter 7 of the LDP will give an indication of the delivery of the Strategy. It is proposed that this is supplemented by an online site database which would effectively be a 'live' version of Background Paper 10 (SD44) which will be updated regularly to give detailed information on the status of and progress being made on bringing forward individual sites. Collectively these will feed in to the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which will give an overall view of the delivery of the strategy over the Plan period.

Qn2k. Why is more flexibility needed?

The Welsh Government states that a notional figure of 10% has previously been indicated and should be based upon evidence of previous under delivery by the local planning authority.

The local planning authority does not have a history of under performance in this area. Data from the Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (see table below) indicates that Bridgend has consistently had an adequate supply of housing.

| Year | Residual Method Total Land Supply in Years | | Past Building Rates Method - Total Land Supply in Years | |
|--------------------|---|------|--|------|
| 2001 | 10.8 | | 6 | |
| 2002 | 9.7 | | 7.5 | |
| 2003 | 9.7 | | 5.4 | |
| 2004 | 10.07 | | 6.2 | |
| 2005 | 8.05 | | 6.9 | |
| 2006 | 7.7 | | 7.1 | |
| 2007 | 8.1 | | 7.1 | |
| 2008 | 6.6 | | 5.4 | |
| 2009 | 6.2 | | 5.3 | |
| 2010 | 5.2 | | 5.5 | |
| 2011 | 5.5 | | 6.6 | |
| *2012 | (BCBC) | 5.92 | (BCBC) | 6.84 |
| | (HBF) | 5.04 | (HBF) | 5.82 |
| * = Disputed Sites | | | | |

Indeed, the Bridgend Unitary Development Plan Inspector considered that a 10% flexibility allowance was *"unnecessary, and could be contrary to the promotion of sustainable development"* (Paragraph 4.1.32 of SD30 refers) She also commented that: *"I am satisfied that the LPA is providing*

sufficient, genuinely available land to provide a 5 year supply as required by Government policy, and will be monitoring that supply on a regular basis in future"

In the LDP, the Council has sought to introduce an element of flexibility given the current economic conditions; however, it should not be construed that this is accepting that some the sites will not be delivered and that, without them, it will be unable to maintain a five year supply of land for housing.

NLP state that: *"it is considered that in some instances that the proposed settlement boundaries have been drawn too tightly in the context of minimising Greenfield release. However, this only seeks to undermine the spatial strategy.*

The Council considers that minimising greenfield releases does not undermine the strategy; indeed, it reinforces it by ensuring that brownfield sites come forward, thereby implementing the regeneration-led spatial strategy.

Qn2m. Is that necessary or is it suitably addressed by reading the LDP as a whole to include policies SP2, PLA4, and ENV4-6?

CCW state that the plan should include a reference to the priority attached to regeneration or environmental capacity if there is a conflict between the two.

The Council considers this would be an unnecessary addition to the plan. Each planning application assessed during the lifetime of the LDP will need to be judged upon its individual merits in the context of the adopted policies. Each development control application will be assessed against the environmental and regeneration policies of the plan, and, considering any appropriate material considerations, including national policy, a balanced decision will be taken.

Qn2p. SP1 says that: 'In particular, development will be focused in the [SRGAs].' Paragraph 3.1.15 in support of PLA1 says that 'The identified settlements will continue to be the main focus of future planned development.' How are these statements to be reconciled when Pencoed and Pyle/Kenfig Hill/North Cornelly are listed as main settlements and have strategic employment allocations but are not included in the SRGAs?

NLP state the site they are promoting in Pencoed was dismissed and that: *"this reasoning itself appears to be a complete contradiction given the allocation of a Strategic Employment Site outside of the settlement boundary in the form of Pencoed Technology Park".* They go on to say that: *"not only does this allocation contradict the 'no strategic growth' stance the Council state they are adopting for Pencoed but also, the*

allocation of employment with no residential growth further conflicts with the other aspirations of the plan e.g. sustainability and carbon reduction targets”

The Council would respond in stating that the Strategic Employment Sites are themselves a component of the LDP Strategy as outlined in paragraph 2.3.9. They are listed in strategic policy SP9 of the Plan which should be read in conjunction with policy SP1 in implementing the plan’s strategy.

These sites provide a strategic function, in servicing the wider County Borough employment needs. It is therefore not appropriate to say that Pencoed and Pyle/Kenfig/North Cornelly ‘have’ strategic employment allocations when their associations and functions are a lot wider than the immediate settlement area.

In relation to the specific sustainability credentials of the Pencoed Technology Park, the Council has identified an opportunity to provide enhanced walking and cycling routes to the site via Policy PLA7(4) of the plan. This will link the site directly with Pencoed train station. The Council will look to secure this facility in negotiations to bring forward development on the site and also through transport grant funding.

Qn2w. Is it these environmental constraints that the Council considers make the settlement unsuitable for inclusion in the SRGA rather than a risk of undermining the regeneration strategy, as the Council suggested in its response to Representation 850.5?

Sullivan Land and Planning on behalf of DL Thomas states that there are no substantive environmental constraints which preclude Coity from inclusion within the SRGA, they then use this opportunity to promote a site in Coity for development.

The Council reserves the right to comment in detail on this site in subsequent sessions. However, it would point out that this site was previously considered at the UDP Public Inquiry where the Inspector concluded at section 3.31 and 3.54 of her report (SD30) that land at Croesty Farm should not be excluded from the Green Wedge between Bridgend and Coity and not included within the Coity settlement boundary. There have been no material changes in circumstances regarding this site since that time.

Appendix A

**Bridgend County Borough
Council**

**Sustainability Appraisal of
the Bridgend Local
Development Plan**

**Response to the CCW's Examination
Statement Q2e**

Project Ref: 26304-002

November 2012



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This note sets out a response to a representation made by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) on the 'Bridgend Local Development Plan Examination: Hearing session 1: Strategy and Vision', question Q2e (Representation ID: 54).
- 1.2 This response is prepared by Peter Brett Associates (formally Baker Associates) who undertook the Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Bridgend Local Development Plan (LDP). The purpose of this note is to address the CCW's concerns and demonstrate how the SA reporting and plan preparation have already taken them into account.
- 1.3 Q2e states:
- “Does the sustainability appraisal and other supporting information demonstrate that environmental considerations have suitably informed the regeneration strategy notwithstanding the omission of such a reference from the listed considerations at paragraph 2.3.11”*
- 1.4 It is Peter Brett Associates understanding that what is being queried here is how the SA has informed the whole process of LDP preparation, and in particular the strategic policies that make up the preferred 'regeneration-led' strategy. It is therefore, in this context that the CCW representation is interpreted.
- 1.5 From their representation CCW's concerns appear to be:
- Lack of emphasis on environmental issues in the SA, leading to a lack of detail on the environmental effects of the 'regeneration-led strategy';
 - Lack of demonstration on how SA has informed the 'regeneration-led' strategy;
 - Too much 'uncertainty' in the assessment of effects;
 - Use of assumptions; and
 - Justification of choice of options in the regeneration strategy.

2 Coverage of environmental issues

- 2.1 Sustainability objectives form the basis of the majority of assessment stages in the SA. These sustainability objectives cover social, economic *and* environmental matters. As is shown in Appendix 6 of the Revised SA, March 2102¹ these sustainability objectives cover all of the environmental matters that must be considered as part of an assessment under the SEA Regulations.

¹ Examination Submission Document 10

Sustainability Appraisal of the Bridgend Local Development Plan

Response to the CCW's Examination Statement Q2e

- 2.2 The sustainability objectives are used as the basis of each stage of the SA. All LDP objectives and policies have been assessed against the sustainability objectives. In addition, they also form the basis of the appraisal of the three spatial strategy options (including the 'regeneration-led' option) as shown in Appendix 4 of the Pre-Deposit LDP SA report, November 2008. Therefore, this demonstrates how environmental issues have been incorporated into the SA, alongside social and economic considerations.
- 2.3 Potential environmental impacts of the LDP are also shown in other parts of the SA Reports. Appendix 5 of the Pre-Deposit LDP SA Report (November 2008) contains the SA of all the proposed strategic policies, and this is updated to include all policies in Appendix 4 the Deposit LDP SA in April 2011. These appraisals, in the form of matrices, show all of the potential environmental effects of the preferred strategy and include recommendations on how further environmental and sustainability benefits can be achieved as well as ways that potential adverse impacts can be mitigated.
- 2.4 The impacts of the strategy and policies are also summarised within the main SA reports. The reports clearly show the performance of the LDP against each sustainability (including environmental) objective. This is shown in:
- Chapter 8 of the Pre-Deposit LDP SA Report, November 2008², where the assessment is focused on implementing the spatial strategy through strategic policies;
 - Chapter 10 of the Deposit LDP SA Report, April 2011, where assessment is now widened to consider all policies of the plan and allocation
 - Chapter 10 of the Deposit LDP Revised SA Report, March 2012, updated to reflect comments on the Deposit LDP, including those from CCW.
- 2.5 Therefore, environmental issues are covered within the SA reports despite being integrated into the overall assessment of sustainability.

3 Iterative SA process

- 3.1 The SA of the LDP, including its preferred 'regeneration-led' strategy, has been an iterative process. The SA prepared by Peter Brett Associates has informed successive stages of plan-making. The consultant's initial SA of the 'regeneration-led' option was reported in the Pre-Deposit LDP Sustainability Appraisal report, November 2008.
- 3.2 Appendix 4 of the 2008 SA Report included a full appraisal of the three spatial strategy options against all of sustainability objectives developed for the SA. The assessment of the options provided a commentary of the relative performance of each against all of the sustainability objectives. In addition to this independent SA undertaken by Peter Brett Associates, the plan-making team also assessed the three alternative spatial strategies as part of their selection of the preferred option³.

² Examination Submission Document 23

³ Examination Submission Document 21

Sustainability Appraisal of the Bridgend Local Development Plan

Response to the CCW's Examination Statement Q2e

- 3.3 The Pre-Deposit LDP also included an SA matrix to assess the potential effects of each of proposed strategic LDP policies (Appendix 5: SA Report, November 2008). The matrix showed the potential impacts of the policies and recommendations for mitigating possible adverse effects. The findings of the matrix appraisal are also summarised in Section 8 of the Pre-Deposit LDP main SA report, Chapter 8.
- 3.4 Further assessment of the spatial strategy was included in successive stages of SA Reporting, prepared in a way that allowed plan-makers to take into account the recommendations of the SA. This includes Chapter 9 of the Deposit SA Report, April 2011 and updates SA policy matrices in Appendix 5.

4 Too much 'uncertainty' in the appraisal

- 4.1 The appraisal of policies in the matrices in Appendix 4 (Deposit LDP Revised SA Report, March 2012) show many instances where a question mark has been used to indicate the effects of a policy on a sustainability objective are unclear. CCW query this use of question marks, but we believe this approach is reasonable and unavoidable as many of the effects of a policy cannot be determined until it is delivered. For instance, the location of development or the quality of its design may have positive, negative or neutral impacts.
- 4.2 However, the matrices do not rely on the symbol summary and for all strategic policies and written commentary is given on the reasons for the appraisal and reasons for uncertainty. The matrices are intended to be read in full to allow the reasoning behind the symbol summarise to be understood.

5 Use of assumptions

- 5.1 CCW query the assumption that was made in appraising the spatial strategy options that 'policies will be in place to mitigation against adverse effects on the natural environment'. This may have been misinterpreted as it was intended to imply that national policy would be in place to protect high quality natural environment assets. This assumption acknowledges development would take place in a real world situation where there are policies and regulations in place to avoid significant adverse effects. It is not intended that the assumption would replace the need for SA to make recommendations on the policy coverage of the LDP.
- 5.2 It should be noted that the SA does contain recommendations on where particular policies would be required to offset and avoid potential negative impacts. The SA policy matrices 'recommendations and mitigation' section and main SA Reports contain details of where additional policy coverage should be considered in the LDP; these have been considered and responded to by the Council in the SA/SEA/HRA Changes Log document⁴.

⁴ Examination Submission Document 13

6 Justification of the strategy

- 6.1 The Deposit LDP is clear that environmental issues have been a consideration of policies to deliver the 'regeneration-led' strategy. The SA is one of a number of information sources that have informed the choice and development of the preferred 'regeneration-led' strategy. Other sources including background evidence that was gathered as part of LDP preparation.
- 6.2 The SA has been an iterative process starting with the consideration of options for growth, through choice of spatial strategy and then in the detailed assessment of policies.

7 Consultation responses

- 7.1 Several of CCWs responses to Q2e are similar to their comments raised on the Deposit LDP, April 2011. These comments were taken into account in preparing the update of the SA Report of the LDP in March 2012. For instance, the SA report now contains a full explanation of what the regeneration-led strategy would mean for sustainability development and clarity on how the sustainability objectives relate to the issues that need to be addressed by the SEA Regulations. The response to CCWs comments are shown in Appendix 7 of the Revised SA Report, April 2012.