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4 February 2019

Dear Sara,

Pembrokeshire County Council – Replacement Local Development Plan – Preferred Strategy Consultation: Welsh Government Response

Thank you for consulting the Welsh Government on Pembrokeshire County Council's Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) – Preferred Strategy consultation. It is essential the Authority is covered by an up-to-date LDP to give certainty to local communities and investors.

Without prejudice to the Ministers' powers, the Welsh Government is committed to helping Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) minimise the risk of submitting unsound plans by making appropriate comments at the earliest stages of plan preparation. The Welsh Government looks for clear evidence that the tests of soundness (as set out in the 'LDP Manual') are addressed.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10, establishes the key national planning priority as the delivery of high quality, sustainable places, through placemaking. PPW requires a wider, sustainable and problem solving outlook, which focuses on integrating and addressing multiple issues. This means a move away from the traditional approach to considering policy areas in isolation and encourages more placed based policies. The seven well-being goals must also be demonstrated, together with the five ways of working which encourage everyone to think in an integrated and collaborative way about policy making, drawing out long term trends. Any references to PPW in the plan and supporting evidence base must be updated to refer to and reflect the principles in PPW Edition 10.

As a **replacement plan the limited context and background documents and topic papers on key issues, such as the Local Housing Market Assessment, affordable housing viability assessment, Gypsy & Traveller assessment (for the plan period) and employment and economic growth is disappointing as a robust evidence base is critical to fully understand the Preferred Strategy.** While the consultation mentions draft studies and work to be undertaken for the Deposit plan, it is difficult to provide comments as many have yet to be completed. Bearing in mind

an adopted plan already exists there is was an opportunity to use the Preferred Strategy stage to consult on those policies that are not anticipated to change, as well as those that will be amended.

The **Welsh Government questions why the Preferred Strategy** (60% of development to main towns and 40% to the rural settlements) has been chosen as your evidence demonstrates it **is not the most sustainable strategy**. The Council's evidence states Option 1, a 70/30 split, is a more sustainable strategy. We disagree with the simplistic assumption there will be increased congestion and pollution issues arising from Option 1 as opposed to Option 2, particularly as the majority of employment and trip destinations will be in the main urban areas where the co-location of homes and jobs would be possible. Option 1 would align better with the objectives of Active Travel Act by promoting sustainable travel options.

It is also **unclear as to how the scale of growth is distributed** within the County beyond the fact that 40% of the overall provision (3,128 dwellings) is proposed in the 115 rural settlements. The settlements to the north of the County have been identified as areas where the Welsh language is important, but it is unclear how this has influenced the scale and distribution of housing within these settlements and whether any mitigation of impacts from new development is proposed. Furthermore, there is no indication as to how growth has been split between the six different tiers of settlements, or why even there is a need for six tiers, excluding hamlets and open countryside?

Demonstrating delivery of the strategy and key allocations will be critical and this should be supported by your Authority's evidence in the Deposit plan. Further comments are set out in the annex to this letter with additional guidance contained in the Draft LDP Manual (3rd edition).

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA 2004) tests of soundness and PPW emphasise the importance of collaborative working between neighbouring LPAs to secure the best possible planning outcomes for communities. Pembrokeshire has strong relationships with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire County Councils to the North and East. The plan should demonstrate how these relationships have influenced the strategy and at later stages, plan policies/proposals and site allocations.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out a legislative framework for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) with provisions for public bodies to contribute to achieving SMNR. The Preferred Strategy should set out a 'direction of travel' on how the plan will aim to improve and not reduce biodiversity and further the resilience of ecosystems. Currently, the Preferred Strategy does not sufficiently reflect the Environment Act 2016.

Our representation also includes more detailed issues in the annex to this letter. Collectively, our comments highlight a range of issues that in our opinion need to be addressed if the plan is to be considered 'sound'. We have indicated where evidence of soundness is not immediately clear and where the evidence base can be improved or strengthened going forward. Key areas include:

- Spatial strategy, scale and distribution of growth
- Delivery and implementation of sites
- Welsh language
- Affordable housing and Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA)

- Gypsy and Travellers
- Employment and economic growth
- Renewable energy
- Minerals

We strongly advise these matters are addressed in order to maximise the potential of your LDP being considered 'sound' at the Deposit stage.

As always, we would urge you to seek your own legal advice to ensure that you have met all the procedural requirements, including Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) as responsibility for these matters rests with your Authority. A requirement to undertake a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) arising from the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, if appropriate, should be carried out to assess the likely effect of the proposed development plan on health, mental well-being and inequality.

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring a plan-led approach to development in Wales. I trust these representations will assist you in preparing your Deposit plan and ensuring your LDP can be found 'sound' and adopted following independent examination. My colleagues look forward to meeting with you and your team to discuss matters arising from this formal response.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Newey
Head of Plans Branch
Planning Directorate

Annex to Welsh Government Letter 4 February 2019 in response to Pembrokeshire County Council's Replacement LDP – Preferred Strategy

Spatial strategy and distribution of growth

The preferred option of a 60% / 40% urban / rural split for housing growth is in line with the current population distribution. However, the evidence to justify why this option is the most appropriate, when considered against PPW and the SA does not support the chosen option. Option 1, a slightly more concentrated approach (70/30 split) is more sustainable (as set out in the Council's evidence) and would have an increased potential to reduce trip movements by private cars and support walking, cycling, public transport and reduce pollution.

PPW10 gives greater emphasis to sustainable transport, including ensuring the location and design of new development reduces the need to travel and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport. The sustainable transport hierarchy should be a major consideration in the preparation of the strategy, directing development to locations most accessible by public transport, as well as sites which can be readily connected to existing active travel routes or future networks. This should be done from the outset.

The spatial analysis would benefit from fuller consideration of the way technology may shape how places function in the future in terms of digital connections, telecoms and access to it and the benefits this could bring in terms of reducing journeys and reduce pollution. The contribution of active travel should also be explored together with promoting the need for charging infrastructure which would enable a switch to low emission vehicles making movement patterns more sustainable and decarbonising transport.

Growth level

The plan makes provision for 7,820 homes in order to deliver a requirement of 6,800 homes. Analysis of the build rates for the 10 years 2008/09 to 2017/18 would indicate an annual average of 407 dwellings per year. If this were extrapolated over the 16 year plan period 2017 – 2033 this would equate to 6,512 units. This broadly aligns with the plan requirement identified by the Council. (There are discrepancies in the Council's evidence regarding small site completions being omitted for several years 2015/16 to 2017/18).

Further evidence will need to be provided in the Deposit Plan to demonstrate;

- why a 15% flexibility allowance is appropriate and how it relates to all housing components, delivery and phasing over the plan period;
- the link between the plan's housing requirement and target for 2,200 jobs to ensure broad alignment in economic activity and labour force projections and reduce the need for commuting;
- the connection between the level of growth and the overall vision and objectives of the plan, including the relationship to key issues such as affordable housing need both numerically and spatially;

- the Preferred Strategy needs to show the plans relationship to the Well-being Plan, particularly in the context of health and well-being;
- links to the wider region, particularly with regard to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and Swansea Bay City Region;
- the content of the Strategy is based on housing numbers as a starting point, but what has not been explored is what this means in terms of commuting, public transport or air pollution, for example.

Delivery and implementation of sites

The delivery of housing is reliant upon the authority allocating sites which are broadly deliverable and in accordance with its spatial strategy. The authority acknowledges “historically some large Strategic Housing Sites have not been developed. Small and medium size sites are more likely to be brought forward by the local housing market” (page 21). If the authority proposes to include strategic housing sites in the Deposit plan, evidence must demonstrate deliverability. The four large sites at Slade Lane North, Slade Lane South, Maesgwynne and Shoals Hook Lane, as summarised in the 2017/18 AMR, show little progress of delivering units on the ground. These sites will need further justification to remain in the plan.

The Deposit Plan should also set out site specific details for allocations and include information on viability, general phasing timescales, key infrastructure requirements and evidence of commitment from developers.

To demonstrate delivery and implementation of housing the Deposit plan must:

- **Identify the spatial distribution and components of housing land supply** as allocations, commitments and windfall sites (small and large) for each settlement and settlement tier in which they will be delivered.
- **Include a housing trajectory and housing land supply table** within the LDP appendices, with a cross-reference in the reasoned justification to Policy (see guidance in the LDP Manual, edition 3).

Welsh language

The authority has identified Welsh language sensitive areas with a threshold of 20% (Policy SP17). The Deposit Plan would benefit from;

- An assessment of how the Welsh language has influenced the growth strategy (scale and location) for those areas, primarily in the north east rural parts of the plan area, defined as areas of Welsh language sensitivity;
- Whether there are any anticipated negative impacts on the language which should be avoided, or where they cannot be avoided, require mitigation
- A justification of how the threshold of 20% aligns with neighbouring authorities.

Affordable housing and the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA)

There is no up-to-date LHMA published (current version 2012) which is a core piece of baseline evidence influencing the scale, type and location of growth for a plan.

Policy SP3 sets a target to deliver 2,000 new affordable units, a considerable increase from a target of 980 affordable units in the adopted plan. There is no evidence to demonstrate how the target will be delivered using cross subsidy from market housing, public sector subsidy or direct delivery by the local authority or RSL's. There is no viability assessment to support delivery of this target. We note the target equates to 30% of the overall housing provision, yet the indicative targets in the adopted LDP for affordable housing (informed by viability evidence) does not exceed 25%. How then will 30% be delivered?

The 4th bullet point under 'policy approaches in rural areas' (page 33) states this will include higher levels of commuted sums to support affordable housing in "less sustainable locations". This is not supported by a viability assessment, or any published evidence and unclear how it relates to the 2012 LHMA

Gypsy and Traveller provision

The Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) covers the period to 2031, not the entire plan period to 2033. The GTAA must identify a need for the entire plan period (up to 31 December 2033).

This must be undertaken in advance of the Deposit plan consultation to ensure the plan clearly identifies the total and types of need over the plan period and makes appropriate provision. Given the high level of need identified in the current GTAA (101 pitches until 2031) this is a key issue for the authority and **failure to identify the level of need and allocate sites in the Deposit Plan to meet the identified need is likely to result in the plan being unable to be found 'sound'**.

Employment and economic growth

Employment forecasts from Experian Goad (2018) and the Regional Economic Study to establish land use requirements have not informed the plan/policies. Policy SP4 supports the delivery of 2,200 jobs, but it is unclear how this growth level relates to opportunities arising from the Swansea Bay City Region and the Haven Waterway Enterprise Zone.

The Deposit Plan should:

- Identify an employment/job target and buffer;
- Allocate sites to meet the need, including use defined by Use Class where appropriate;
- Identify the Haven Waterway Enterprise Zone in accordance with the Welsh Government's designation;
- If appropriate, include a new policy to protect and identify key employment sites to safeguard for future employment use;
- include a policy to support alternative uses on existing employment sites not safeguarded; and
- Explain how allocated sites will be delivered, especially key allocations.

Minerals

The Deposit Plan should reference the landbank requirements set out in the Regional Technical Statement (RTS) and state how the LDP will satisfy these. We note there is an under provision of 2.94mt of sand and gravel reserves within the region of Pembrokeshire (including the National Park) Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. These authorities should work collaboratively to address the shortfall and identify specific sites.

Renewable energy

LPAs should take a leadership role in pro-actively planning for renewable and low carbon energy. LPAs should fully utilise evidence in their renewable energy assessments (REA) to develop locally specific policies, set renewable energy targets

and direct development to the most appropriate locations. In relation to the REA we have the following observations which require additional supporting evidence;

- For wind technology, the authority should justify the separation distance of 10-15km, as a 7km distance is suggested in the 'Planning for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy – A Toolkit for Planners (September 2015);
- In relation to solar PV resources, the separation exclusion zone of 1km along the boundary with the National Park Authority should be justified; and
- The restriction of solar PV to grade 5 agricultural land and lower grade only is too constrained and not in line with the guidance in the Toolkit which states lower grade agricultural land of grades 3b, 4 and 5 should be assessed. The authority must justify their approach.