



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**13 DECEMBER 2021**

#### **PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF THE 'LLANILID' STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREA**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (COUNCILLOR ROBERT BEVAN)**

**AUTHOR: Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to update Members on progress made since September 2017 when Cabinet considered and approved the Strategic Opportunity Areas report and the further development of schemes and projects within the 'Llanilid' Strategic Opportunity Area.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note progress made since September 2017 in the development and delivery of projects and investment opportunities within the Llanilid Strategic Opportunity Area (SOA).

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The economy throughout the UK is facing significant challenges through continued uncertainty over Brexit and the significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges faced, investment in the Llanilid area has continued, and this report sets out the progress that has been made in the development and delivery of a range of projects and initiatives both by the public and private sectors since the Cabinet decision to prioritise investment around the Strategic Opportunity Area.

## 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Strategic Opportunity Area for Llanilid was intended to build on the strategic site allocation in the Council's Local Development Plan, the initial investment in the 'Valleywood' studios complex and a history of planning permissions for the wider development of the area between the strategic site and the M4 (see plan attached at Appendix 1).
- 4.2 The Llanilid SOA recognised the potential for regional significant growth, the ability of the private sector and other partners to deliver, together with the scale of opportunity and significance in this part of the County Borough.
- 4.3 This Llanilid/M4 Corridor is the only inward investment site of this scale in the Cardiff Capital Region, and is a critical opportunity for major transformational growth in the economy of the region. To unlock the full potential of this area, the opportunities include:
- **New Homes:** the SOA site could deliver up to 5000 new homes, with 1850 already consented.
  - **Jobs:** a site of this scale offers a unique opportunity for regionally significant inward investment of grade A business and manufacturing premises.
  - **Link To Pencoed Technology Park:** joining up the sites could provide further opportunity sites for larger investments on the M4 site.
  - **Hotel / Leisure:** The report outlined the opportunities from 5\* resort hotels in landscaped setting with golf and other activities, to chain hotels for convenience but quality.
  - **Film And TV Studio/Production Facilities:** this site was already home to 40,000sq.ft of studios, with more consented there is regionally a successful and growing creative arts sector.
  - **Healthcare / Education / Other:** with easy access across the region and beyond, this corridor is a well connected location.
  - **Completion The A473 Llanharan Link Road:** the SOA report outlined the Council's commitment to the completion of the Llanharan Link Road and recognised the need to develop a wider sustainable transport network to support the delivery of the SOA.
  - **New M4 Junction:** linked through public transport and active travel to strategic transport hubs to maximise the attractiveness of the destination as an investment opportunity

## 5. PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 Four years into the Framework established by the SOA report and despite the economic challenges already identified, investment in the area has continued, development is being carried out on the ground and the following schemes are in development:

### **Dragon Studios**

- 5.2 The studios complex was constructed in 2008 but was significantly underutilised and was subsequently put into Administration. In 2018 it was acquired by a South Wales company, Dragon Studios and has since gone from strength to strength. There has been significant investment in the facilities at the site and it is the only purpose-built Film and TV studio facility in Wales with a significant and unique “back lot” space. Recent investment has included the completion of a fifth sound stage which has been constructed to industry leading specifications.
- 5.3 The facility was recently used for the production of the £80m sci-fi drama ‘A Brave New World’ undertaken by NBCUniversal which aired on Sky TV. It is estimated that this production injected a minimum spend of £20m into the local economy in March 2019 to March 2020. The Production also successfully ran its Production Assistant Bootcamp Programme, running two, 2 day sessions with 56 attendees in total with many progressing to the Production Assistant Mentorship programme which created over 40 paid places, equivalent to over 2,100 work days, in various departments including Production, Camera, Locations, Art Department and Sound.
- 5.4 The site is currently fully occupied by Walt Disney Studios/Lucasfilms who are carrying out the production of a sequel to the hit film ‘Willow’ which will be aired a major series on Disney+. This production has already generated a significant number of local employment opportunities and it is expected that the final economic benefits to the area will be far greater than even previous productions.
- 5.5 Officers of the Council have worked with Dragon Studios throughout and are currently involved in pre-application discussions around a major expansion of the facility which will include new sound stages, offices and workshops. Officers are also leading discussions between the studios and the University of South Wales and FE Colleges with a view to establishing clear links between the wide range of jobs and roles needed to deliver major productions and the skills and training that are needed to access them. It is anticipated that all this work will position the Dragon Studios complex and the wider SOA to secure longer term ties with Disney and Lucas films in RCT, alongside a range of other production and supply chain companies. Officers are also working with the studios to ensure that Public Rights of Way in the area

are protected, appropriately diverted and enhanced for the benefit of the wider community.

## **New Homes**

- 5.6 There is an opportunity to deliver between 3000 and 5000 new, high quality, sustainable homes within the SOA. This opportunity presents itself in two elements. The first being the implementation of a planning permission for nearly 2000 new homes which delivers on the strategic allocation in the Council's LDP. The remaining new homes could be delivered on land between the strategic site and the M4 and further information on this work is outlined in section 6.
- 5.7 Persimmon Homes are currently implementing planning permission (See plan at Appendix 2) for the delivery of:
- 1850 new homes
  - New primary school
  - Class D1 medical/health centre (up to 800sq.m.)
  - Class D2 community uses (up to 800sq.m.)
  - Class A1 foodstore (up to 2,000sq.m.)
  - Class A1/A2/A3 retail units (up to 1,000sq.m.)
  - Class A3 public house/café
  - Class B1 offices (up to 500sq.m.)
- 5.8 Work is well underway on the delivery of the housing element with 108 new homes already completed. Revised drawings have been submitted by the developers for the new primary school which are currently being consulted on with a view to approval being granted in the near future.

## **Health Facilities**

- 5.9 Discussions are ongoing about the form and content of the uses within the planned village centre, this has included a focus on community and health service uses and opportunities. A number of positive meetings have been held between Council Officers and the Project Team of CTMUHB to progress this much needed healthcare facility for the area. The CTMUHB Project Team have met with Persimmon to discuss the land requirements for the development of the Healthcare Facility and the timescales for Persimmon's delivery of the wider village centre complex are being aligned with the programme to deliver the new health care facility. The local GP Practice have also confirmed their commitment to moving from their current premises into the new facility once it is built. A report is currently being prepared to identify and detail the potential procurement routes for the building and to highlight the Welsh Government processes that the Health Board need to follow with regards funding approval. The detailed service model is also being scoped which will inform the space requirements.

## **Llanharan Link Road**

- 5.10 Delivery of the link road is essential to the comprehensive delivery of this strategic development site and is one of the Council's key transport priorities. The Council has now committed over £4.1M to the project, which has also been supported by Welsh Government Local Transport Grant Fund.
- 5.11 The scheme is a hybrid project involving public and private sector collaboration; the first leg, to the west, was constructed some time ago entirely by the developers. The middle section is constructed to formation level and is required to be completed by the developers before the 801<sup>st</sup> house is occupied. The final section to the east is being delivered by the Council with significant private sector contributions. It completes the link over the railway to the A473 and incorporates linkages with Llanharan via Llanharry Road. Improvements also extend to the west to resolve the issues at Cow Corner. Comprehensive Active Travel measures will be incorporated throughout the project. Positive discussions are taking place between officers and Persimmon to explore a coherent approach to the delivery of each party's element of the road and to ensure that economies of scale are maximised.
- 5.12 The Council recently undertook two very well received and supported public consultation events in the community as part of the Pre-planning Application Consultation process which should lead to a planning application being submitted early in the next calendar year.
- 5.13 The Deputy Minister for Climate Change announced a Review of Road schemes on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021. The Council believes this unique project sits outside the scope of this Review as a critical and integral element of this strategic development site.

## **6. LLANILID MASTERPLAN**

- 6.1 Section 5 highlights the progress made since the SOA was reported to Cabinet in September 2017. To maintain that momentum, work is well underway to develop a masterplan for the southern half of the SOA which essentially comprises over 250HA of reclaimed former opencast mine (see historic arial photo at Appendix 3) and has the capacity to accommodate 18HA of high-quality employment land, around 3,500 new homes, alongside a range of education, community retail and recreation facilities.
- 6.2 Given the scale of the potential development, it is imperative that this would be an exemplar development, based on strong placemaking

principles and efficient in its use of resources, resilient to climate change and promote an active and healthy lifestyle where the use of the car is a last resort. Whilst there will be a strong emphasis on developing robust public transport and walking and cycling routes within and in and out of the area, the masterplan process will also consider the need for a new junction on the M4 originally envisaged in the SOA.

- 6.3 Officers are working with the consortium of landowners alongside their consultant team to ensure that any new plan for the area delivers on what is important for RCT. This includes ensuring that any new housing makes provision for a range of specialist accommodation for older people and those with special needs alongside significant percentage of affordable homes.
- 6.4 In line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions, the masterplan will demonstrate the opportunities for major new tree and landscape planting, a sustainable system of surface water management and significantly enhanced biodiversity. This will in turn help underpin a self-sustaining community where active lifestyles and well-being are at the heart of residents' daily life.
- 6.5 Transport infrastructure will also be key to delivering on the sustainability aspirations of the masterplan, both within the SOA to maximise the amount of internal trips via public transport, walking and cycling, but also to promote high quality connectivity to the wider region. Given the scale of the development and its location the masterplan will need to focus on delivering an exemplar level of public transport solutions and active travel opportunities.
- 6.6 Members will be aware from other reports by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services that capacity pressures at Y Pant School, which is the catchment secondary school for the SOA, have become increasingly problematic. This pressure is brought about by the considerable increase in new housing in the area, as well as parents/carers making informed decisions to rent and purchase homes in the catchment areas of one of our highest performing schools. The expansion of housing developments in the wider area is also impacting significantly on admissions in the wider area, including neighbouring secondary schools to Y Pant. Whilst plans are under consideration to bring additional this additional accommodation online by the end of 2022, given our current projections, these additional classrooms will potentially provide the required accommodation at Y Pant for the next 4-5 years.
- 6.7 It is clear then that the scale of development envisaged by the SOA and emerging masterplan will itself have significant implications for education provision in the area. As such, officers of the Council are in

detailed discussions with the landowner consortium around how new primary and secondary education facilities could be delivered within the masterplan area.

- 6.8 It is important to note that all of the work currently being undertaken on the masterplan, including the thoughts around new schools, will have to be tested through the planning system both in terms of its promotion through the LDP revision and through the submission of planning applications for all or any individual element, alongside our established processes for consultation on the delivery new education facilities and catchment areas.

**7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

**8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no Welsh Language implications as the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

**9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 9.1 There is no requirement for consultation in respect of this report.

**10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications as the contents of this report are for information purposes only. The financial resources to deliver these projects and initiatives came from funding provided by external sources such as Welsh Government and from approved RCTCBC budgets.

**11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 11.1 There are no legal implications as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.

**12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 12.1 The regeneration projects and initiatives detailed in the report will collectively boost the local economy and provide job opportunities for local people.
- 12.2 All developments will directly contribute to the goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act. In particular, the economic and environmental well-being of Wales, supporting the delivery of a prosperous Wales, a more resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

### **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 The 2017 – 2022 SOA Framework provided a focus for the delivery of an ambitious programme of investment projects and regeneration initiatives aimed at delivering real results in terms of job creation, growing and attracting new businesses, providing homes for people and greater connectivity.
- 13.2 The houses delivered so far help meet the demand for much needed new homes in the area and the growth and success of the studio will have a significant contribution to a resilient and sustainable post-Covid RCT economy.
- 13.3 With further investment and a coordinated approach between the public, private and third sectors, the scale of the opportunity in Llanilid can continue to be realised resulting in a dynamic, diverse and sustainable growth area that is in exemplar in terms of both the Council's and Welsh Government's well-being aspirations and can deliver a place where people want to live, work and visit.

#### **Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***  
**Finance & Performance**

***Contact Officer***  
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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Item:**

**Background Papers**

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