



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL RLDP STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the RLDP Steering Group meeting held on Wednesday, 9 June 2021 at 10.00 am.

#### County Borough Councillors - RLDP Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor G Caple      Councillor D Grehan  
Councillor G Hughes      Councillor P Jarman  
Councillor M Powell      Councillor S Rees  
Councillor G Thomas

#### Officers in attendance

Mr J Bailey, Head of Planning  
Ms C Hewitt, Planning Policy Team Leader  
Mr O Jones, Development Services Manager (Planning Policy)

#### 13 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillors L M Adams, J Bonetto, J James MS, J Williams and R Yeo.

#### 14 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### 15 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the RLDP Members Steering Group meeting held on the 21st May 2021, as an accurate summary of the discussions.

#### 16 RHONDDA CYNON TAF REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020-2030

Members were reminded that this was the second meeting to seek Members' views on the strategic issues relating to the remaining slides within the presentation.

The following comments were captured for the remaining topics:

#### **Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language**

- Important that equity for access is considered with regards to housing needs e.g., a recent debate in relation to properties in Ynysybwl, equity to access to education was not a consideration. It is important that Planning Officers familiarise themselves with similar matters at the early, pre planning stages.
- Due consideration needs to be given to the Council's priorities e.g., the effect of the sale of land on our heritage.

- We need to be flexible with regards to the policies we adopt to allow developments to happen e.g., the alternative to conversion into flats which has strong opposition due to the parking requirements. We need to seek better alternatives and improve the development of town centres.
- Historic Buildings – Need to strike a balance with historic buildings which we don't want to fall into disrepair or being demolished but equally we don't want to turn them into housing
- Heritage priorities – this is closely linked with tourism e.g., the Iron Age Settlement, Rhigos, it's about building on this type of attraction
- What is the access to Welsh Education? The Services we offer as a Council e.g., Youth Services, all need to be bilingual, both languages need to be treated equally

### **Community Infrastructure (Education, Health and Community facilities)**

- There have been a number of objections to the applications in the south of the county borough concerned that the infrastructure is unable to cope with the number of housing developments
- The Health Board need to engage with and comment on planning applications
- The lack of Welsh Medium Education is causing pupils to travel further afield contributing to traffic problems
- There should be a community provision to keep pupils close to their communities rather than forcing them to travel far and wide
- The local services such as surgeries should be fit for purpose and close to their communities
- There may be a need to travel further to access some services e.g., Pont Newydd Surgery has a multi-disciplinary team, physio's, pharmacy team, GP Surgery
- Some surgeries have recruitment issues, others not so much and are able to attract professionals
- 6<sup>th</sup> Form provision- there is a great deal of choice but there may be a need to travel further to access the better education
- The north of the county borough is not an area of population growth like the south, there will be a long-term problem
- Some surgeries in the north of the county borough are like slums for populations
- The CTMUHB has to be engaged where there's a growth in population

### **Officer response**

There is a balance with some of the provision, larger residential applications contribute towards the value of contributions such as education and highways. Smaller developments of around 50 units are not enough value for meaningful infrastructure. There is also the Community Infrastructure Levy policy whereby all developments in the South that have CIL receipts contribute to the North. The Council also has a Regulation 123 list which enables it to prioritise where the CIL receipts are spent and how it chooses to direct the income.

### **Tourism & Leisure**

- How will the Council's draft Tourism Strategy, which is out for consultation feed into the process?
- The Council should designate Rhigos, Hirwaun, the surrounding

mountains, outdoor pursuits, ironworks and associated accommodation as Heritage Sites

- Accommodation for short stays should be supported for these areas, adjacent to the Brecon Beacons
- Lots of applications for accommodation are now feeding into the success of Zipworld – we need to be agile
- How do we manage in the interim as the demand for accommodation is there now?
- Does the Planning Department have the capacity to respond to an increase in such applications?
- The Strategy needs to build on the success of ZipWorld and explore the surrounding natural environment
- Local businesses require training and support to maximise the potential for additional visitors to the area
- We need a comprehensive list of accommodation so that visitors can spend more than one day in the area
- In addition to accommodation, transport also needs to be improved, the rail link from Aberdare to Rhigos, how do visitors get to these facilities and beyond?
- Developing areas that are remote e.g., Penderyn has no toilet facilities and no services, all these contribute to the development of a successful tourism strategy
- We need to concentrate on developing cycle routes
- We have lost a lot of bridleways recently and there is a huge interest in horse ownership

### **Town Centres & Retail**

- In 2002 a number of centres were identified as regeneration areas, but apart from Treorchy, which has bucked the trend, it didn't work
- With the collapse of major stores there are gaps on our high streets with large commercial buildings left redundant
- Many independent traders close half day which has a detrimental impact on other traders in the area
- The Council should commission a piece of work by a retail expert to assesses the current situation and identify why our town centres aren't attracting big names
- The challenges that face our town centres aren't unique to RCT, they are worldwide
- Town centres need a mix of retail and housing with no empty buildings and the retail areas need to be condensed, (unlike Tonypany which is too spread out)
- There has been significant development in many of our town centres such as Porth, Pontypridd and Tonypany
- Online shopping has been the demise of small shops in town centres
- The successful areas have retail, cinemas and food outlets altogether
- What is the difference between RCT and Merthyr Tydfil in attracting big brands to its precincts?
- Town centres need to diversify and have people living there in safe, good quality accommodation
- There is a need to consolidate the SPG around HMO's
- Merthyr has one town centre, RCT has many and some are successful such as Llantrisant
- Both Porth and Tonypany are making a bid for Principal Town Centres

## **Officer response**

Retail was changing pre Covid-19 and we are working on what retail we need in our town centres, identifying patterns across RCT (which has been influenced by Covid). We are looking at town centres as community hubs not just for retail.

## **Coal Mining Legacy (Contaminated land, brownfield sites, underground works and tip stability)**

- There are lessons to be learned about how we reclaim the legacy from the land
- Need to think smartly and not be hoodwinked by developers when they say delivering social housing is too expensive
- Welsh Government have invested in phurnacite land, in the middle of a flood plain to support 500 dwellings-it's been there so long
- Concerns with underground workings as evidenced recently
- We need to work with WG and other local authorities looking at the coal tips across Wales, including those in private ownership e.g. In Caegarw, the tip is mineral rich but excluded from the LDP
- We have to acknowledge that the market for coal has gone and this is just a legacy (and a liability now)
- Safety is the key consideration overground and underground
- Do we need new categories for tips?
- We need a Land Reclamation Programme funded by Welsh Government to proceed
- We need to consider how we run the land reclamation programmes in tandem with the removal and safety of infrastructure

At this stage the Chair read aloud Cllr J James's comments in his absence:

Following on from the last meeting, I wanted to raise my concerns that not enough is done to protect our old buildings – and would be keen to see more done on this. I think having rows of old terrace houses and chapels and buildings such as the old county cinema are positives for our area and more needs to be done to stop them falling into disrepair. Conservation zones need to be also more strictly adhered to in my opinion

## **Any Other Important Issues**

Members were afforded the opportunity to identify any other issues they felt worthy of inclusion:

- Tree planting – Site designation for tree planting. No sites in RCT have been identified nationally
- Time to consider some obvious candidate sites and when the time is right WG should adopt these areas
- Effect of development on a flood plain – there is a site in Cynon Valley on a C2 flood plain. It is an industrial site now and earmarked for future rail development. The rail service in the Cynon is dogged by flooding so why purchase this site?
- We need to consider the utilities such as water supply, sewage supply and treatment plants

**17 CHAIR'S REVIEW & CLOSE**

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contributions to the meeting and to the remaining topics from the presentation.

The Chair advised that a questionnaire would soon be circulated to all Members for them to complete to gather their views and include any issues not discussed at the meetings. He further advised that a public consultation would also be undertaken in preparation for the LDP.

**This meeting closed at 11.35 am**

**G Caple  
Chairman.**