



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the RLDP Steering Group held on Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 10.00 am.

County Borough Councillors – The following RLDP Steering Group Members were present online:

Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor G Hughes	Councillor W Lewis
Councillor S Rees	Councillor J Smith
Councillor L A Tomkinson	Councillor R Williams
Councillor M Norris	

Officers in attendance

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

Apologies for absence

Councillor S Trask	Councillor A Dennis
Councillor S Emanuel	Councillor W Jones

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

19 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the RLDP Members Steering Group on the 14th March 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

20 UPDATE ON THE REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2037

The Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) served to remind Members of the RLDP Steering Group of the background to the revised LDP and preferred strategy. He advised that the current LDP has a plan period of 2006 to 2021, with the Revised LDP (RLDP) for the period 2022 to 2037, however, the current LDP remains in force until the RLDP is adopted (which is timetabled for early 2026).

The Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) commented that the Preferred Strategy is the first formal stage of publication of the RLDP process. It sets out the key Issues, Vision, Objectives and strategy options; before presenting a 'Preferred Strategy'. He added that following the many Members Steering Groups to date, the Preferred Strategy has now been formulated,

putting together all the above stages/elements that have previously been discussed in the meetings.

He concluded that the Preferred Strategy for the Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2022 – 2037, will be presented to Full Council at its meeting on the 17th January 2024 and will seek Council's approval to carry out a statutory six week public consultation on the RLDP Preferred Strategy.

21 PRESENTATION ON THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

The Planning Policy Manager and the Planning Policy Team Leader provided an overview of the key points contained within the Power Point presentation under the following headings:

- The Revised Local Development (RLDP) Preferred Strategy
- RLDP Objectives
- The Settlement Hierarchy
- Growth Options
- Spatial Strategy Options
- The Strategy
- The Strategy Delivery –Housing & Employment
- Sustainable Communities Strategy in the Northern Strategy Area (NSA)
- Sustainable Growth in the Southern Strategy Area (SSA)
- Preferred Strategy – Key Diagram
- Strategic Policies
- Candidate Sites & Evidence Base
- Questions

Issues, Vision and Objectives

The Planning Policy Manager advised that a suite of issues has been identified, which are shown in detail in the full Preferred Strategy and he explained how the identification of these issues was achieved, through multiple stages, public engagement, consultation with the LDP Forum, the Housing Stakeholder group, the RLDP Members Steering group and the Council's internal officer working group. The statutory Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) also informed the preparation of the stages of the Vision, Objectives, Preferred Strategy and its Strategic Policies.

The Planning Policy Manager set out the following Vision which has been identified for the RLDP;

The Vision by 2037 is for a more resilient and sustainable RCT:

An area of sustainable, cohesive communities, who are healthy, well connected and who have equal access to high quality homes, jobs, services and facilities.

An area more resilient and considerate to the challenges of climate change with protected and enhanced biodiversity and green spaces and a well-connected sustainable transport system.

An area with a diverse and healthy economy, supported by vibrant and viable town centres and a flourishing tourism sector.

A RCT that celebrates its heritage and is resilient for the future.

The Planning Policy Manager set out the **18 objectives** for Members information that have then been identified.

The Revised LDP Settlement Hierarchy

The Planning Policy Manager commented that a key part of the RLDP process is to undertake a Settlement Assessment that informs the identification of a Settlement Hierarchy. This should ensure that the scale of developments are focussed in those places where they can be best accommodated and serviced, in line with the scale of the existing settlements. He explained that the hierarchy has for the most part remained unchanged from the current LDP; with evidence continuing to indicate that there is no individual settlement in the Rhondda area, that is of a necessary large scale, to be identified as a Principal Settlement. However, one outcome of the Settlement Assessment indicates the need for Pontyclun to now form part of the Principal Settlement of Llantrisant/Talbot Green due to the physical interrelationships and social and economic dependencies between them. Aberdare and Pontypridd will remain as the other Principal Settlements.

Growth Options

Members were advised that a *Demographic Evidence* report has been prepared which sets out a range of growth scenarios; both demographic/housing and employment based. The Planning Policy Manager commented that the preferred growth option for the RLDP/Preferred Strategy is to follow one of the mid-ranged WG principal projections, resulting in a new housing requirement of 564 dwellings per annum or a total of 8,450, between 2022 and 2037. He added that this approach is considered aspirational yet remains an achievable and sensible approach.

Spatial Strategy Options

The Planning Policy Manager set out the 8 Spatial Strategy Options to determine where would be the most appropriate places to deliver the necessary levels of growth and he stated that analysis shows there are very positive aspects to each one, however, no single option would be appropriate on its own to meet the necessary levels of growth, and the breadth of the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP. He added that certain key elements of the current LDP strategy are sound; including that there is a need to continue with a different strategy approach for the north and south of the County Borough.

The Planning Policy Manager acknowledged that Members wished for Social Housing not to be termed as 'Affordable Housing'

Councillor Hughes referred to the prediction of 560 homes a year to be built over the lifetime of the LDP, and asked whether, at the end of the lifespan of the LDP, whether there would be a significant shortage of housing, the gap would close or would the figures remain the same. The Planning Policy Team Leader commented that the figures include new dwellings and existing buildings in landbanks but there would be scope to review it once the plan has been developed.

Councillor Rees referred to the issue in the north of the Borough and particularly in view of the Welsh Government road building when there is a need for

connectivity with public transport to encourage residents away from their cars. She added that it is essential to open up the Cynon Gateway to access Aberdare. The Planning Policy Team leader responded that option 2 takes advantage of the A470/M4/A465 corridors and the scope for development to build on these successes.

The Strategy

The Planning Policy Manager advised that the housing requirement of 8,450 new dwellings has been identified to meet the vision and strategic objectives of the Revised LDP. He added that the 8,450 housing requirement will allow for the provision of sufficient market housing which will also contribute significantly towards the delivery of social housing throughout the plan period. The overall housing provision will be met by existing permitted 'landbank' sites, necessary new allocations, and presently unknown 'windfall' sites. This level of growth will also help to increase employment and job opportunities, whilst helping to maintain levels of residents of working age.

Councillor Hughes questioned the impact of the housing demand on the climate emergency. The Planning Policy Manager commented that it is important to choose sustainable locations that benefit from public transport, that are close to town centres and builds that benefit from better quality construction methods and techniques and a policy that does embrace the climate change agenda.

Sustainable Communities in the Northern Strategy Area (NSA)

The Planning Policy Manager set out the strategy for the Northern Strategy Area (NSA), the primary aim of the Northern Sustainable Communities Strategy is to continue to strengthen the communities there. For the most part, the urban areas in the NSA are those in the Rhondda Fawr, Rhondda Fach and Cynon Valleys. He advised that the Sustainable Communities strategy will seek opportunities for its delivery through the following mechanisms, the South East Wales Metro, Empty Homes, Tourism and Continued Flexible Settlement Boundaries

Councillor Hughes agreed with the Strategy, in that the Metro will provide much needed linkage to the north of the county borough. He also referred to bringing empty properties back into use by using Brownfield sites, some of which have sat empty for years.

Councillor Grehan asked for clarification as to where Tonyrefail would sit in the Strategy and what plans are there to develop tourism in respect of cycle routes and our mountain sides. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that Tonyrefail is in the South, Trebanog is in the North. He added that cycle routes are listed in the current LDP and plans are in place to continue to safeguard those yet to come forward.

Councillor Lewis asked if the local authority is in discussions with WG about empty properties across the county borough as Housing Associations struggle to make them viable.

Key Sites in the NSA

The Planning Policy Manager stated that a number of Key Sites are proposed, which by definition are seen as 'key' to delivering the Council's strategy and he presented details on the Potential Key Site 1 – Penrhys Village, Tylorstown which would redevelop a 29.8 hectare site for up to 500 new houses in the plan period, alongside the replacement and improvement of public facilities and

services.

Potential Key Site 2 – Land South of Hirwaun -The Planning Policy Manager set out the proposal for this site following the pre-extraction of coal reserves in recent years.

Sustainable Growth in the Southern Strategy Area (SSA)

The Planning Policy Manager commented that the Sustainable Growth in the SSA strategy will seek to provide the necessary growth for existing communities, with additional growth to meet the wider needs of the whole of RCT.

The Sustainable Growth strategy will seek opportunities for its delivery via the following mechanisms, the Principal Settlement of Pontypridd, Set Settlement Boundaries and Empty Properties

Key Sites in the SSA

The Planning Policy Manager outlined the details for potential key sites 3 and 4 as follows, Potential Key Site 3 – Land at Llanilid, Llanharan and Potential Key Site 4 - Llanilltud Faerdref, Efail Isaf which is made up of a number of Candidate Sites in adjoining locations on the south of the wider settlements of Llantwit Fardre and Efail Isaf.

Members discussed the public consultation that will commence at the end of January/early February 2024 in relation to the impact of the four key sites.

Strategic Policies

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented the strategic policies which form part of the framework for delivering and implementing the Preferred Strategy of the RLDP. The policies seek to set out the Council's strategic direction for the relevant topic areas, which include, Climate Change and Carbon Reduction, Place-making and Sustainable Communities, Flood Risk Management, Biodiversity and the Natural Environment, Green Infrastructure and Open Space, Housing, Employment Land and the Economy, Retail and Commercial Centres and Tourism.

Members discussed the importance of sustainable locations and having public transport links situated close to new housing developments. Councillor Grehan pointed out that sustainable locations are key and he cited examples of huge developments in Church Village and Efail Isaf where there are currently no train routes. The Planning Policy Team Leader acknowledged the benefits of reducing the use of cars by providing the correct infrastructure close to services and facilities by working with TFW and bus companies to establish bus routes into the sites.

Members discussed engagement with the Cwm Taf University Health Board regarding their involvement with the LDP so that many issues can be overcome. One Member referred to the specific case in Tonyrefail where there has been a significant growth recently with only one health centre to support the growing number of residents. Members also raised the need to adopt national and sustainable building methods/technology with set guidelines. Councillor Norris advised that discussions have taken place with Welsh Government so that the bar can be raised in the future.

The Planning Policy Team Leader referred to SP5 – Green Infrastructure and Open Space and alluded to the need to undertake a Green Infrastructure

analysis which is increasingly more important in recent years. With regards to SP8-Retail and Commercial Centres, Members agreed that significant development in town centres creates organic footfall and economic upturn. A Member considered that having more residents living in town centres is important with the mix of private and social housing but stressed there is also a need for on site surveillance to be further developed.

Candidate Sites

The Planning Policy Team Leader advised that over 300 sites have then been taken forward through the formal RLDP 'Candidate Site' process. The initial, first stage assessment of these sites has been undertaken. She added that a formal 'Candidate Site Register' would be published alongside the Preferred Strategy with the site details and assessment results.

Members were keen that local Members were provided with information on the Candidate sites based in their wards. The Planning Policy Manager confirmed that following the Council's decision, the Candidate Site Register would be published with the consultation documents and would therefore be accessible to all.

This meeting closed at 11.45 am

**Cllr L Tomkinson
Chair.**