



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY PANEL – 25TH FEBRUARY 2016

**SUBJECT: LAMMAS ECO VILLAGE VISIT AND ONE PLANET DEVELOPMENT
UPDATE**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members of the Panel on the site visit to Lammas Eco Village, and to seek the views of the Panel on the recommendation to discuss the value of further work with stakeholders regarding One Planet Development in the county borough.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In Nov 2014 SDAP received a report on Technical Advice Note 6 "One Planet Development", having been the first Planning Authority in Wales to approve an application under this legislation.
- 2.2 The Panel requested a visit to the Lammas Ecovillage in Pembrokeshire to further consider the potential regeneration opportunities offered by one planet developments. The visit was held on the 4th August 2015
- 2.3 The Authority has taken a proactive approach one planet developments by including one planet developments as one of the identified exceptions to the settlement boundary policy in the draft replacement Local Development Plan.
- 2.4 At this stage it is not clear how much demand there would be for a Lammas type development in Caerphilly. It is recommended that officers discuss, with stakeholders, potential demand for one planet developments in the county borough to assess the value in further work.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Note 6, "One Planet Development, Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities" links to the following strategies:
- Caerphilly Local Development Plan
 - "Living Better, Using Less", Sustainable Development Strategy, 2008.
 - "Caerphilly Delivers" Single Integrated Plan, 2013 – 2017

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In 2010 Welsh Government published Technical Advice Note 6 "One Planet Development", Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities" as part of its commitment to "One Wales, One Planet" that "within the lifetime of a generation, Wales should use only its fair share of the earth's resources".
- 4.2 TAN 6 sets out a set of essential characteristics that all One Planet Developments in the open countryside must have: -
- They must have a light touch on the environment – positively enhancing the environment wherever possible through activities on the site.
 - Be land based – the development must provide for the minimum needs of residents in terms of food, income, energy and waste assimilation in no more than five years.
 - Have a low ecological footprint – the development must have an initial ecological footprint of 2.4 global hectares per person or less with a clear potential to move to 1.88 global hectares per person over time.
 - Have very low carbon buildings – these are stringent requirements, requiring that buildings are low in carbon in both construction and use.
 - Be defined and controlled by a binding management plan which is reviewed and updated every five years.
 - Be bound by a clear statement that the development will be the sole residence for the proposed occupants.
- 4.3 The policy also requires that a management plan, which will form the basis of a legal agreement relating to the occupation of the site, should accompany applications. The management plan should provide evidence that the proposals meet the exceptional nature of One Planet Development in the open countryside. Annual monitoring reports on progress are required and a full review after five years needs to be undertaken as part of the planning condition. Failure to fulfil the management plan if not corrected as the management plan envisages, can be addressed by planning enforcement measures.
- 4.4 Caerphilly County Borough Council became the first Local Authority in Wales to grant planning permission under the One Planet Development legislation, when permission was granted for Nant y Cwm Farm.
- 4.5 At the Sustainable Development Advisory Panel meeting on the 6th November 2014 the Panel received a presentation from Dan and Sarah Moody, of Nant y Cwm Farm on their experience and their life on their One Planet Development at Nant y Cwm Farm.
- 4.6 As a result of the report and presentation, the Panel requested a site visit to the Lammas Eco Village in Pembrokeshire to further explore the potential for regeneration that One Planet Developments might offer. A visit was undertaken by 12 members and officers on the 4th August 2015. The visit included presentations on the background to the development, a site tour and discussions on the potential role of One Planet Developments in regeneration.

Background and information from site tour

- 4.7 The Lammas Ecovillage is a low-impact, off-grid ecovillage near Crymych in Pembrokeshire, West Wales, comprising nine households and a community hub on a 76 acres (31 ha) site. Buildings are constructed of natural materials and energy obtained from renewable sources. Planning permission took some years to obtain, but has established a replicable template for similar future developments in Wales.
- 4.8 The ecovillage is centered on a Community Hub, from which courses, conferences and open days are run. It was constructed using local timber, straw bale insulation and locally sourced aggregate as well as incorporating various green technologies (such as a masonry stove, passive solar heating and a wood-fired kitchen). Funding for the Community Hub came from the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

- 4.9 The project has been designed as a replicable template - with each household purchasing a 1000-year agricultural lease from the organisation which provides them with autonomy and security. Electrical power is generated from a series of micro photovoltaic installations along with a 27kW hydro generator. Heating power is supplied from timber (either waste timber from woodland management or from short-rotation-coppice biomass plantations). Domestic water comes from a private spring and other water needs are predominantly met from harvesting rainwater.
- 4.10 The nine smallholdings demonstrate a range of natural building techniques though there have been challenges over compliance with building regulations which led to some of the residents being taken to court by Pembrokeshire County Council. These issues have since been resolved.
- 4.11 The concept for the Lammas ecovillage is that of a collective of eco-smallholdings working together to create and sustain a culture of land-based self-reliance. The project supports a permaculture approach to land management – in which human beings are considered an intrinsic part of the ecosystem. As a result the approach to environmental management is one of stewardship for future generations rather than exploitation for short term gain.
- 4.12 The 76 acre site was previously a single sheep farm which was barely sustaining the couple who farmed it. The pasture was compacted and relatively unproductive. Biodiversity and Soil health indicators were poor. Since its purchase in 2009 the project has worked to create a new infrastructure across the landscape that supports a wide spectrum of ecologies that in turn will provide for the diverse needs of its human inhabitants. Trackways have been created across the site and water patterns have been mapped and harnessed to retain as much water in the landscape as possible. Wild plants and native trees have been planted alongside specific plants chosen for their adaptability and productivity. Animal husbandry techniques are employed by residents as a method of managing landscape evolution whilst simultaneously providing meat, dairy and fibre produce. The project now supports 9 families who produce between 40% and 85% of their livelihood directly from the land.
- 4.13 The residents of the ecovillage have come from all walks of life and whilst some have experience of low-impact living and natural building, many have none. They have all purchased plots costing between £35,000 and £40,000, and have 5 years to establish their holdings. Water, woodland and electricity are managed collectively and the plots are largely dedicated to growing food, land-based businesses, growing biomass and processing organic waste. Land-based enterprises include fruit and vegetable production, livestock and bees, woodland and willow crafts, value-added food production, seed production, and vermiculture (the farming of composting worms).
- 4.14 Under the planning conditions the project reports to Pembrokeshire County Council each year, setting out its progress against a series of performance indicators that include traffic generation, land-based productivity, and ecological footprinting. The project is required to substantially meet its needs from the land and demonstrate positive environmental, social and economic benefit.
- 4.15 The dwelling houses, workshops and barns have all been designed and built by the residents themselves, with help from volunteers. For the most part they are built from local natural materials or recycled materials. With the dwellings there have been issues in demonstrating compliance with building regulations, and whilst there are currently no outstanding issues with building control officers, this continues to be a significant hurdle for low-impact builders. Low-impact construction is by its very nature, organic and low-cost. The dwellings that have been completed in the ecovillage have cost between £5,000 and £14,000.

Discussion on the regeneration potential of One Planet Developments

- 4.16 Following the site tour a discussion was held with residents of Lammas and representatives of the One Planet Council on the regeneration potential offered by one planet developments.
- 4.17 The previous use of the 76 acre site as a sheep farm barely supported 2 people. The Eco village provides up to 85% of the livelihood of 9 families with individual businesses and links to other local communities and businesses.
- 4.18 Whilst this type of development and life is not for everyone, it was identified that there is growing demand for sites for this type of development. It was not however clear how much demand there would be in “the Valleys” and in Caerphilly County Borough in particular.
- 4.19 Individuals would be able to apply for planning permission based on TAN 6 guidance, however it was discussed that greater regeneration potential was offered by the Lammas model with a number of families working together providing a range of businesses.
- 4.20 It was agreed at the meeting that officers in Regeneration and Planning should consider the discussions and information from the visit, and provide recommendations on any potential opportunities for Caerphilly County Borough.

Recommendations from subsequent discussions

- 4.21 It is considered that there are potential environmental and regeneration opportunities created by developments such as Lammas. The legislation and the “Lammas model” provide a context and blue print for potential future one planet development projects.
- 4.22 TAN 6 enables individuals to apply for planning permission for one planet developments. However the Authority has taken a proactive approach, and has acknowledged that one planet developments can occur outside settlement boundaries, by including reference to one planet developments in the draft replacement Local Development Plan. Under county-wide policy CW 19, criteria C, one planet developments has been identified as one of the identified exceptions to the settlement boundary policy.
- 4.23 At this stage it is not clear how much demand there would be for a Lammas type development in Caerphilly. One approach could be to consult with the One Planet Council and other stakeholders to gauge interest and to assess the benefit of further work in promoting one planet developments in the county borough.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No Equalities Impact Assessment has been done on this report, however Sustainable Development and Equalities interact on many levels and work done in one area often supports the other. Creating sustainable communities, employment and transport for example, is of benefit to all the residents of Caerphilly county borough, regardless of their individual circumstances or backgrounds.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 There are no consultation responses, which have not been incorporated into this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the Panel note the information from the site visit and discussions held at Lamas Eco Village. That the Panel endorse the recommendation to discuss, with stakeholders, potential demand for one planet developments in the county borough to assess the value in further work.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 For the reasons set out in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

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