



## **SPECIAL COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN THE CHAMBER PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 5.00PM**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor E.M. Aldworth – Mayor  
Councillor M.A. Adams – Deputy Mayor

#### **Councillors:**

C. Andrews, A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Pettit-Broughton, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, G. Ead, K. Etheridge, C. Elsbury, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, J. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, J. Jones, S. Kent, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Sadler, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, J. Scriven, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, L.G. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, K. Woodland, C. Wright

#### **Together with:-**

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), R. Kyte (Head of Planning and Regeneration), R. Thomas (Development Control Manager), V. Morgan (Principal Planner/Statistician), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer). R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

### **RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chief Executive reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors. D.T. Davies (MBE), N. Dix, G. Enright, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, M. James, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price and A. Whitcombe, together with D. Street (Corporate Director Education and Housing), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) and R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer).

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at the start or during the course of the meeting.

## REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

### 3. **CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH 2ND REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UP TO 31ST MARCH 2035 - PREFERRED STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to the report which sought Council approval for the Preferred Strategy for the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan to be published for consultation for a statutory 6-week period.

The report advised Council of the progress made in respect of preparing the Caerphilly County Borough 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan (2RLDP), and sought Council approval to use three recommendations from the LDP Focus Group as the basis for the 2RLDP. Council approval was also sought for the identification of the Parc Gwernau site at Maesycwmmmer as a Strategic Site in the Preferred Strategy, for Officers to investigate the options for assisting the early delivery of the access road for the Strategic Site, and to publish the Preferred Strategy for consultation as part of the statutory 6-week Pre-Deposit Consultation process in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

Members were reminded that at its meeting on 23rd October 2019, Council resolved to commence a review of its Adopted LDP. The first formal stage of the process was completed in June 2021, with the Council and Welsh Government agreeing the Delivery Agreement that sets out the timetable for the delivery of the plan and when and who the Council will engage with throughout the process. The Preferred Strategy is the first formal stage in the preparation of the 2RLDP document and sets out the overarching strategy that will provide the framework for preparing the detailed Deposit Plan.

The next stage in the process (the Preferred Strategy) has been prepared through an engagement process that included Elected Members, representatives from Community Councils, Council Officers, stakeholders and the Youth Forum. At each stage in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, the outcome of the engagement process was reported to the LDP Focus Group, who made the following recommendations to Council on the content of the preferred strategy: that (1) the Draft Vision and Aims (included at Appendix 1 of the report) be used as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP; (2) that Scenario J: Cardiff Capital Region Growth in Working Age Population projection be used as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP; and (3) that a hybrid strategy comprised of elements of Option 3: Strategic Site, Option 4: Metro Investment Focus and Option 5: Town Centre First be used as the basis for the 2RLDP.

As part of the engagement process, Officers presented a range of population and housing projections and addressed what levels of population and housing the county borough would seek to accommodate through the Plan period. Members were asked to note that it is the Council who decides what level of population, housing and employment the county borough will accommodate during the plan period. A key factor in considering the projection options was that many of these realised a decrease in those of working age, a decrease in the number of children and an increase in the number of older persons. This is an unsustainable position, not only from a demographic point of view, but also that a decreasing workforce would result in economic decline contrary to Welsh Government policy and Cardiff Capital Region economic aspirations.

In order to meet these aspirations, the LDP Focus Group recommended the use of Scenario J as the basis for the plan. The implications of this Scenario were set out in the report, with the main points being a population increase of 10,685, an increase in the economically active

population of 4,126, a total housing allocation requirement of 7,400 dwellings, with a new allocation total of approximately 3,000 dwellings and the need to identify 44.5 hectares of land for new employment provision. The Preferred Strategy has been prepared on this basis, with Members asked to note that this Strategy does not allocate sites, as this will be done through the Deposit Plan, which is the next stage in the process.

It was explained that the only site that is allocated in the Preferred Strategy is a Key Strategic Site at Maesycwmmmer to deliver 2,700 dwellings, although it was noted that only 1,200 dwellings are proposed to be built during this Plan period, with the remainder to be built in a subsequent Plan period. The report also sought Council approval for Officers to work with the proposers of the Strategic Site to investigate options to assist the early delivery of the access road for the site, as this would provide significant benefits and progress on the work which will be reported back at the appropriate stages in the preparation process.

Members were advised that the Preferred Strategy sets out a framework of policies that will inform the preparation of the detailed Deposit Plan, providing a strategic policy basis for more detailed policies to be prepared to manage the future growth of the county borough.

It was noted that a recent Members' Seminar on the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan had been held on 15th September 2022 and had been well attended by Councillors. One Member also acknowledged the usefulness of the series of seminars held with Elected Members and Community Councils to provide input into the emerging Plan, and thanked the Officers involved for answering many of the questions surrounding the LDP process.

Council discussed the report and a number of queries were raised regarding the proposed Maesycwmmmer Strategic Site. Officers confirmed the proposed access road would be located between Dyffryn Industrial Estate near Llanbradach and Crown Roundabout near Pontllanfraith, and would serve the proposed new development on the Strategic Site for the site. In response to a query around safety inspections of the site in view of its mining history, Officers gave assurances that all of the sites within the 2nd Replacement Development Plan will be subject to rigorous assessment as part of the approval process and will include a requirement for developers to submit a range of detailed evidence. Once an application reaches the development control stage, detailed studies will be undertaken at this point as well as in terms of any future planning application.

A Member raised concerns that a relief road at Maesycwmmmer could add to existing traffic pressures along the A472 road, and Officers confirmed that as part of any proposal for Maesycwmmmer, a full traffic impact assessment will be undertaken. However, indications from a previous traffic movement and modelling assessment suggest that the road running through this new Strategic Site would provide relief to the A472, as it would change the way that people travel in and around that area. It was also highlighted to Members that the new 2nd Replacement LDP aims to fundamentally change the way that people travel around the county borough, which places an emphasis on green infrastructure such as walking or cycling and includes a target in the Plan to achieve this modal shift over the Plan period.

Clarification was sought on the total number of Alternative Growth Scenarios referenced at Section 5.11 of the report, together with the evidence base and calculations for these scenarios. Officers confirmed that there was a typographical error in the report and that 11 scenarios (rather than the 12 referenced) had been generated for consideration. The four scenarios that would result in an increase in the economically active population had been considered for inclusion in the Plan and examined through the engagement process. Members were referred to the Pre-Deposit Plan at Appendix 4 of the report which included the evidence base that underpins the Preferred Strategy, and it was confirmed that all these evidence documents will be published alongside the Preferred Strategy once it is released for consultation, and could also be made available to Members in advance upon request. The complexity of these technical documents was highlighted, and Members were reminded

that Officers are available to assist with any queries around these complex technical documents.

A Member sought clarification on the distinction between Option 4: Metro Investment Focus and Option 5: Town Centre First, given that the five principal town centres also serve as transport hubs for the county borough. Officers acknowledged the presence of these travel hubs but explained that the Preferred Strategy recognises the predominance of bus services and lack of train services across some of these towns, and that both options need to be examined independently and collectively because they are very similar in terms of the sites they will generate, and that as many of the sites available close to town are also close to Metro hubs, there will be some level of hybrid overlap between these two options.

A Member queried the accuracy of the population and household projections used to underpin the Preferred Strategy, in view of the results of the 2021 Census which indicated a reducing population and changing demographics across the county borough. The Member referred to the high numbers of people on housing waiting lists and enquired about the intended purpose of the proposed new dwellings and the benefits that these would bring to local communities.

Officers provided an overview of the components that make up the housing supply calculation, with these assumptions creating an available land supply baseline equating to approximately 4,500 houses. Therefore the 2nd Replacement LDP will seek land for the remaining 3,000 houses up to 2035. The affordable housing targets will be set as part of the Deposit Plan, with the existing affordable housing targets already included in the current LDP and used as a starting point for negotiation with developers at planning stage, and any subsequent allocation is then passed to Caerphilly Homes or a registered social landlord (RSL). Moving forward, these targets will be reviewed as part of the Plan preparation process, and Members were also advised that the Council needs to have regard to the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), which is a key piece of evidence for the new Plan and will determine social housing requirements and inform the new targets moving forward.

In terms of the intended purpose of these dwellings, it was explained that the Council needs to plan for societal factors such as under-occupancy and hidden households, and to have regard to the economic growth position that is advocated in the Preferred Strategy to increase and retain the working age population who live in the Caerphilly county borough. It was explained that unless this particular factor is addressed, this will result in a smaller working age population looking after an increasingly aging population, which is not a sustainable position in the long-term. Members were also advised that the Council needs to have regard for Future Wales 2040 and therefore the Council need to plan for growth, rather than decline, in order to conform with this national development plan.

Officers also highlighted the need for caution when comparing the 2021 Census against the 2011 results, explaining that although this has indicated a decline in the Caerphilly county borough population since 2011, from a planning perspective the Council plans for households rather than population, and there has actually been a small increase in the number of households since 2011. Members were also asked to note that the 2021 Census was undertaken during the pandemic, which may not give a true reflection of where people were living at that particular time. Members were made aware that when the 2011 Census was published, it was 5,000 people higher than previously figures had indicated. The ONS reviewed previous mid-year estimates but classed the difference in the figures as 'unattributable' as they could not identify what the cause of this population increase was, and the 2011 Census should therefore be viewed with caution.

The Member expanded on his earlier query about the benefits to local communities and expressed concerns that many new development properties are being purchased by people from outside the area who commute to work outside of the county borough, thereby placing pressure on the local infrastructure without bringing any benefit to communities or

contribution to the local economy. The Member also referenced the significant investment across the Heads of the Valleys and asked if the proposed development at Maesycwmmwr was speculative in nature.

Officers explained that in terms of the Heads of the Valleys investment, the Council is required to prepare a Plan that is deliverable, realistic and achievable, and provided an overview of the Candidate Site Process which provided a call for landowners to submit sites for residential, commercial and tourism development. The sites that have been included in the Candidate Site Register on the Council's website identify the development pressures across the county borough, particularly around the Caerphilly Basin and Mid Valleys Corridor. However, less land is generally available further north due to the topographical constraints on development, and landowners have not submitted sites in this area because of land values and the difficulties in delivering houses via the private sector. It was also emphasised that sites across the Upper Rhymney Valley can only be included within the LDP if the landowners and developers are willing to put these sites forward for consideration and if there is a demonstrable ability to bring these sites forward.

It was explained that the Authority has not submitted many sites for inclusion in the process as it already has surplus social housing in the Heads of the Valleys, and when allocating sites across the county borough, consideration needs to be given to factors including catchment, housing demand, housing need, and housing supply and values, in order to demonstrate that the Plan is sound and holds up to independent examination. Members were also advised that increasing the economically active population will require an element of migration into the county borough, and that from the experience of past development plans, when development was concentrated in the mid valleys, it benefited the whole of the county borough because it put affordable housing and modern housing in the reach of people from the upper valleys as well.

A Member referred to Strategic Transport Improvement Routes detailed within the Pre-Deposit Plan and asked whether consideration had been given to the possible reinstatement of the rail service between Caerphilly, Abertridwr and Senghennydd. Officers explained that the transport routes programmed within the Plan have been agreed with Transport for Wales in terms of the Metro works and that to their knowledge, there are no plans for these particular routes within the new Plan period, as the A472 route will be heavily reliant on bus transportation, but it was confirmed that Officers would look into this query and respond to the Member following the meeting.

Another Member referred to the Safeguarding of Former Rail Lines detailed within the Pre-Deposit Plan and asked if the Council had considered using the former Merthyr line to create a safe cycling route between Bedwas, Maesycwmmwr and the Sirhowy Valley cycle tracks network. Officers confirmed that they work closely with Highways colleagues in relation to the Active Travel Network Maps and that any routes reflected in these Maps will also be reflected in the Deposit Plan moving forward, which will be the next stage of Plan preparation. Additionally, if the Council is made aware of any plans for a national route running through the existing network, these would also be reflected in the Plan. Members were encouraged to bring to Officers' attention any routes that they would actively wish to see included in the Plan. It was emphasised that there will be a general policy in place to safeguard former rail lines, and that this policy is already included in the current LDP to protect against development in order to safeguard these particular routes.

A Member referred to the potential impact on local infrastructure such as GP medical centres and asked if local health boards had been consulted on the proposals. Officers gave assurances that the Council has negotiated and liaised with all relevant authorities including the police, fire service and health service in the preparation of the Plan. However, it was emphasised that the Development Plan is solely a land use document which provides the planning policy framework to enable develop and allocate the land, and subsequently it would be for the provider of the land to develop the infrastructure around its use.

One Member referenced the issue of affordable housing as a pressing concern in view of rising house prices and welcomed the proposals around the 2nd Replacement Local Development, particularly in view of the need to plan for population growth in order to realise benefits such as town centre regeneration. He also highlighted that the use of Scenario J (CCR Growth in Working Age Population) as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP had received universal support from the cross-party LDP Focus Group.

A Member asked how the Council can ensure that more social housing is included in the new developments and if it would be possible to use local builders and for these new houses to be let locally. The Member also referred to the land to be allocated for employment purposes and asked if it would be possible to distribute this equally across the county borough to allow people to work and live locally, and if the Council had any major employment sites identified or planned at this point in time.

Officers explained that the LDP must have regard to viability when setting social housing targets and so a 100% affordable housing target would not be achievable in every situation. However, the Council can allocate sites for 100% affordable housing where the need has been demonstrated, which would essentially mean that the RSLs and the Council would develop and build on these sites themselves where need is identified. It was emphasised that the LDP is a policy framework document for private market housing as well as social and RSL housing, and under the Section 106 process, the Council will negotiate with the developer on the level of affordable housing provision. Officers also outlined the process that is undertaken in cases where a developer determines that affordable housing provision for their site is not a viable option, and it was emphasised that all the LDP can do is allocate land for housing and set the affordable housing targets and then negotiate on a site-by-site basis through the development management process when planning applications come forward. As an example, if Caerphilly Homes owned the land, then it would be in the Council's remit to determine what the affordable housing split would be, although they would have to meet policy compliance as a minimum requirement.

In terms of the query around land for employment use, it was explained that there are not many available employment land sites remaining in the current LDP, with very few opportunities left in the south of the borough and the Heads of the Valleys. Members were advised that the lack of available land to accommodate new growth and employment needs to be addressed in the new Plan and therefore the Council have carried out a study with neighbouring authorities to address this issue from a regional point of view. The Council will be looking to allocate 44.5 hectares of land for employment use in the new Plan and it is intended to distribute this throughout the county borough, but it has been recognised that there is a particular need for this land within the Caerphilly Basin area.

A Member referred to the Metro scheme and asked if there were any plans to improve the bus services across the Valleys in view of the lack of rail infrastructure in the area. The Member also referred to the Heads of the Valleys Focus set out at Section 5.18 of the report at Option 2 and asked what areas this option referred to, explaining that his ward is not able to secure regeneration opportunities due to its isolated location. Officers acknowledged that the Metro scheme also includes the bus network as well as the rail network and it is the Council's vision under the Metro scheme to move to a system where travel between bus and train routes are integrated and seamless, and therefore the Council are working with their regional partners and TfW to achieve this position during the Plan period.

Officers explained that in terms of the Heads of the Valleys Focus at Option 2 of the report, this targets the majority of the development from the Mid Valleys corridor northwards and towards Bargoed and Rhymney. However, there have been a number of issues around this option, as there would not be sufficient land available that would meet the requirement to have proximity to a principal town on a Metro node, or sufficient land to meet the required growth to take this option forward. The Member was also invited to contact Officers if there

was any particular sites for development or regeneration opportunities that he wished to put forward for his ward, so that these can be discussed in readiness for the Deposit Plan.

A Member suggested that in view of the LDP being a strategic document which is subject to a monitoring process, there is a need to tailor the LDP to circumstances within the local area and requirements around local infrastructure. Officers emphasised that the LDP Annual Monitoring Report demonstrates the delivery of multiple infrastructure schemes that were allocated in the existing Adopted LDP, including new train stations, Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, GP surgeries, and 21st Century Schools. With regards to future plans, the new Plan will plan for the infrastructure that the new development generates demand for, and it will have regard to policy objectives such as the changing of transport modes and placing a greater emphasis on walking and cycling instead of road building. It was reiterated that the LDP is a land use document which allocates land for housing and other purposes, and it is for the developer, such as local health boards in the case of GP surgeries, to then take forward the associated infrastructure. However, the LDP will plan for the infrastructure that new developments generate, so if highway junction improvements are required as a consequence of a housing site, then this will lead to a Section 106 requirement for these works, and if it is for a strategic piece of infrastructure, then the Plan will make provision for this.

A Member expressed the need to recognise the benefits of the 2nd Replacement LDP in terms of employment provision as well as housing provision. Officers explained that in terms of employment growth, Caerphilly county borough already hosts a number of established businesses which employ a very skilled workforce, and it is a key intention of the Council to help these companies develop by having suitable provisions within the LDP in place for land allocation, appropriate infrastructure and investment growth to accommodate and retain these companies within the county borough should they wish to expand, whilst also attracting new businesses to the county borough at the same time.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 46 for, 1 against and 7 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The progress that has been made in preparing the 2RLDP be noted;
- (ii) The following recommendations made by the LDP Focus Group as part of the process of preparing the draft Preferred Strategy document be endorsed:
  - (A) To use the Draft Vision and Aims outlined in Appendix 1 as the basis for the 2RLDP;
  - (B) To use Scenario J: CCR Growth in Working Age Population as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP;
  - (C) To use a hybrid strategy comprised of elements of Option 3: Strategic Site, Option 4: Metro Investment Focus and Option 5: Town Centre First as the basis for the 2RLDP;
- (iii) The identification of the Parc Gwernau site in Maesycwmmmer as a Strategic Site in the Preferred Strategy be approved;
- (iv) Officers work in partnership with the landowners/proposers of the site to investigate funding opportunities to assist the early delivery of the access road for the Strategic Site, with progress being reported at appropriate points and at subsequent stages of the plan preparation be agreed; and

- (v) The Preferred Strategy for consultation and that the Preferred Strategy be the subject of a statutory six-week consultation, that will be commenced on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and will conclude on 30 November 2022, in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended), be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 they were signed by the Mayor.

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MAYOR