

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

16 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BRIDGEND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) – REVISED DELIVERY AGREEMENT

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the necessity to revise the Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement (DA), previously approved by the Welsh Government (WG) in June 2018 and to seek approval to make amendments to the Timetable and Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) for LDP preparation in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Development Control Committee has, at its meeting on 20 August 2020, agreed the recommendations in this report and referred the recommendations to Council for approval.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Part 6 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare a LDP for its area. The LDP will set out the Council's land use strategy for the period 2018 – 2033 and the first stage of the process required the Council to prepare a DA for approval by WG.
- 3.2 The DA is a mandatory requirement of the LDP process and is considered to be a key tool for the speedier production of land use plans. It comprises the following two elements:
- **The Timetable** – this sets out how the Council will manage the programme for preparing the LDP. It identifies the key stages of the LDP process where the public and other interested parties will be given the opportunity to comment on the strategy, objectives and policies contained within the Plan.

- **The Community Involvement Scheme (CIS)** – this sets out who, when and how the Council will consult and engage with various stakeholders, including the general public, during the production of the LDP.

3.3 Public consultation on the Council's Draft DA was undertaken during April and May 2018, with the results reported to Council on 20 June 2018. Council approved the document for submission to WG.

3.4 The Council's DA was approved by WG on the 25th June 2018. Since that date, Bridgend County Borough Council has made considerable progress on the preparation of the LDP, including the following:

- Prepared, consulted upon and finalised the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Appraisal Scoping Report which establishes the sustainability context and baseline for Bridgend County Borough and sets sustainability objectives against which the LDP will be assessed during its preparation.
- Invited the submission of Candidate Sites in September – December 2018, and made available a Register of all those sites submitted. The Stage 1 Assessment has been completed and determined which sites have the potential to support the Preferred Strategy of the LDP.
- Identified a clear vision and objectives for the Replacement LDP and assessed strategic growth and spatial strategy options to achieve the most sustainable form of development and address existing capacity issues in the County Borough.
- Prepared and consulted upon the Preferred Strategy of the LDP in September – November 2019. The Preferred Strategy provides the strategic context for the preparation of more detailed policies, proposals and land use allocations that will subsequently be included in the Deposit LDP.

3.5 Progress towards the next key stage of the replacement LDP, the Deposit Plan Consultation Stage (originally scheduled for July/August 2020), has been delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and this is the subject of the necessary changes to the DA set out below.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The Council received a letter from the WG on 7th July 2020 advising it to undertake an assessment of the technical evidence base underpinning the replacement LDP, alongside the preferred strategy and policies in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the pandemic. Officers have completed this task and the findings are attached at Appendix 1 for noting. WG also advised that DA's should be adjusted to account for any necessary changes to the LDP timetable in light of delays caused by the pandemic. This should also include amendments to the CIS given the need to adjust to new patterns of working and consider alternative methods of stakeholder engagement brought about by the need to maintain social distancing.

4.2 The revised DA is attached at Appendix 2. This highlights at 2.3 the delays to LDP preparation as a result of the pandemic, namely:

- The inability of site promoters to carry out site-specific technical work to support their Candidate Site submissions;
- The closure of schools and workplaces resulting in new temporary patterns of movement preventing the assessment of accurate traffic impact of development proposals;
- Social distancing measures preventing physical meetings;
- Temporary suspension of council meetings and committees;
- Delays caused by adjustment to new ways of working; and
- The need to review the LDP Evidence Base in light of the pandemic

4.3 The proposed revisions to the Timetable are illustrated in Table 1 as follows:

KEY STAGE		TIMESCALE	
DEFINITIVE		FROM	TO
STAGE 1	Update Evidence Base & SA/SEA Baseline Framework & Assessments - Ongoing	April 2018	December 2020
STAGE 2	Delivery Agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission to Welsh Government – June 2018 • Response to LPA to be received within 4 weeks 	April 2018	July 2018
STAGE 3	Pre-Deposit Participation & Consultation - Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 week statutory consultation (October – December 2019) 	August 2018	December 2020
STAGE 4	Deposit LDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 week statutory consultation – <i>but allowance made for 8 weeks</i> 	January 2021	March 2021
INDICATIVE		FROM	TO
STAGE 5	Submission	Autumn 2021 (Sept)	-
STAGE 6	Examination	Autumn 2021 (Nov)	Winter 2022 (Feb)
STAGE 7	Inspectors Report & Adoption	Winter 2022 (Feb)	Spring 2022 (Mar)
STAGE 8	Adoption	Spring 2022 (Apr - May)	

- 4.4 Members will note that it is now anticipated that the Deposit Plan will be subject to consultation between January and March 2021 (previously July - August 2020). An allowance has also been made to extend the statutory consultation period of 6 weeks to 8 weeks to provide more time for people to provide their views whilst accounting for any further restrictions imposed due to the pandemic. The final adoption of the LDP is likely to be delayed by up to 6 months as a result, though the dates relating to the stages following submission of the plan to WG are indicative.
- 4.5 The CIS has been amended to account for the use of the following methods of Stakeholder Engagement in order to maintain the social distancing measures that are likely to be required for the foreseeable future:
- Engagement with Members and Community Councils through virtual meetings i.e. Skype / Microsoft teams;
 - Interaction with stakeholders through specific topic or area based surgery sessions on a pre-booked basis;
 - Consideration of the interactive use of social media / digital communication (i.e. Q&A sessions);
 - Greater emphasis on the use of web based technology;
 - One to one telephone conversations to engage those members of the community without Internet access;
 - Dissemination of hard copies of information to individuals where other sources of information have failed;
 - Use of larger venues for public exhibitions and meetings to accommodate social distancing measures – e.g. sports halls, school halls, outside space;
 - Appointment based drop-in sessions to manage the number of stakeholders present at any given time and to help manage officer time; and
 - The use of internal and external agencies to assist with community meetings and engagement (e.g. Planning Aid).

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and regulations of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales Regulations 2005) requires that a Local Planning Authority (LPA) must commence a full Review of its LDP every 4 years.
- 5.2 The LDP Manual (Edition 3, 2020) states that for the preparation of an LDP Revision, a revised DA is necessary, with the LPA undertaking engagement and/or consultation as it considers appropriate.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no direct implications associated with this report. However the policies contained within any Replacement LDP will require an equalities impact assessment to be carried out.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The Replacement LDP will be prepared in accordance with the 7 Wellbeing goals and the 5 ways of working as identified in the Act.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The cost of the LDP Review will be met from the Development Planning budget and carried out by development planning staff with expert advice and evidence procured from consultants and through collaboration with neighbouring authorities as required. The resources required to prepare the replacement LDP are set out in detail in section 2.6 in the DA attached at Appendix 2.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 That Council approve the revisions to the timetable and Community Involvement Scheme and authorises the Group Manager Planning & Development Services to submit the revised Delivery Agreement (attached at Appendix 2) to Welsh Government; and
- 9.2 That Council provides delegated authority to the Group Manager Planning & Development Services to make any factual corrections or minor amendments to the Delivery Agreement as considered necessary.

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Background documents: Appendix 1 – Covid-19 Replacement LDP Review
Appendix 2 - Revised Delivery Agreement