



Conwy County Borough Council Local Development Plan Newsletter

Issue 7: April 2012

LDP Newsletter April 2012

This seventh edition of the LDP Newsletter brings you up to date on the progress of the LDP following a Full Council meeting on 23rd February 2012 and the next steps to submission of the Plan. Information on the sustainable process to site selection, the updated LDP Delivery Agreement and new evidence base is also detailed in this April 2012 LDP Newsletter.

The Final Checks - Ensuring a Sustainable Plan

The Conwy LDP has reached the Deposit stage in its preparation. The next step is to submit the Plan to the Welsh Government and the Planning Inspector for Examination in Public, subject to Council approval.

In light of comments received to the consultation on the revised Deposit Plan (March 2011), some changes to the Plan (known as 'focussed changes') were proposed to Council on 23rd February 2012. Focused changes included a reduction in the overall projected growth and related housing and employment; some new and updated policies and changes to some development sites, with sites added and others removed.

The Council meeting resolved to approve the policies within the LDP, but to further review the development strategy to assess whether

there are any alternative brownfield¹ sites that could be implemented to avoid the take-up of greenfield development sites over the Plan period and improve the Plan's sustainability overall. This work is currently underway and will be presented to Council in the summer (2012) prior to submission of the Plan to the Welsh Government and Planning Inspector for Examination in Public.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is at the heart of the Conwy LDP, where promotion of a more balanced age structure and younger population represents a vital objective in order to realise improved economic performance, social gains and environmental protection and enhancement. Conwy's population structure is changing at the detriment to economic prosperity and community identity. It is essential that these key impacts are tackled to ensure the long-term sustainability of Conwy. New local employment, appropriate housing and the promotion of a skilled and knowledge based economy which optimises the value of the area's natural resources, environment and cultural heritage are required to achieve this.

Sustainable Approach to Site Selection

The Conwy LDP applies a sustainable 'sequential test' approach in assessing development sites for allocation in the Plan. To date, landowners and developers have submitted over 600 sites to the Council

1. *Previously developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings) and associated fixed surface infrastructure.*

Conwy LDP (this is known as the LDP Delivery Agreement). The Delivery Agreement not only details the timetable for preparation of the Plan but also sets out how the public can get involved in its preparation.

The revised timetable in the Delivery Agreement will be made available for public viewing shortly following agreement with the Welsh Government. Copies will be made available on the Council's website and in Libraries and Council Offices.

Focused Changes and Submission

The proposed focused changes to the Plan will be presented to Council later in the summer. Once all focussed changes are agreed by Council, they will be subject to a further 6 weeks public consultation. All representations received over the course of the focussed changes consultation will be considered by the independent Planning Inspector only and not the Council. At the same time, the LDP, accompanied by the Focussed Changes Report, Consultation Report and Sustainability Appraisal Report will be submitted to the Welsh Government and the Planning Inspectorate.

An Examination in Public will follow approximately 6 months after submission of the Plan. The inspector's decision is final and the Council are expected to make all the changes to the Plan prior to formally adopting it in mid 2013. The Plan will then be monitored annually to ensure it is contributing positively to meeting the needs of Conwy.

LDP Evidence Base and Future Events

It is essential that evidence base used to inform the Plan is up-to-date and in place to justify the approach. Approximately 40 pieces of background evidence base have been produced so far to inform the Plan and further updates and new evidence is still required. The evidence to date can be viewed on the LDP web-pages: www.conwy.gov.uk/ldp

- **Conwy Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment (SFCA):** The Policy Service has now completed the SFCA. The SFCA is an important document which assesses

the flood risk impact on sites and whether development is acceptable. The SFCA was revised to take account of the potential impacts arising from climate change.

- **Conwy Retail Study:** The Retail Study of 2007 is now being updated to determine whether new retail floor-space is required to meet the needs of the Conwy population. Llandudno, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno Junction, Abergele and Llanrwst will all be assessed to determine whether land for new floorspace retailing is required over the LDP period. The results of the study are expected later this year.
- **Conwy Gypsy and Traveller Study (GTAA):** The GTAA is currently being prepared in partnership with neighbouring authorities and University of Wales, Bangor. The objective of the study is to determine whether there is a requirement to provide a site for the gypsy and traveller community in Conwy. The results and next steps will be presented to Council in the summer.
- **Land Values - Developer Workshop:** It is essential that when developers are negotiating the purchase of land with landowners they take into account costs associated with providing contributions towards affordable housing, open space, etc. Additionally, developers should negotiate a purchase price based on the known constraints that they will have to overcome to develop the site (e.g. raise land to overcome flood risk issues, decontaminate land, etc.) Conwy County Borough Council will be organising the Land Values Workshop to present the LDP policy and reaffirm the approach to buying land for development. The workshop will provide further certainty and evidence to a Planning Inspector that Conwy's affordable housing policy can deliver the needs of the County Borough.
- **Welsh Language and Housing Occupancy Survey:** This survey is now complete and available for viewing on the Planning Policy web-pages. A questionnaire was distributed to new housing built over

the last 5 years in Conwy asking specific questions about where occupants last lived and live now, the reasons for moving to the new property and the occupants' Welsh language skills. The survey was a joint project between the Welsh Language Board and the Council.

- **Welsh Language Impact Assessment:** The Council is updating its background evidence to demonstrate how the Welsh language has been taken into account at various stages of the LDP. Policies and site allocations have been assessed for their potential impact on the Welsh language and culture. The results of the Housing Occupancy Survey will also feed into this impact assessment.
- **Brownfield Land Potential Study:** In response to a recommendation made at Full Council on 23rd February the LDP Team are undertaking a Brownfield Land Potential Study as a means of potentially reducing greenfield allocations in the LDP. A thorough assessment of all the sites submitted to the Council will be undertaken to determine whether any brownfield sites could be implemented. Whilst this process has been thoroughly undertaken in preparation of the LDP to date, it is considered essential in terms of sustainable development that this final check is undertaken and presented to Council prior to submission. Potential

sources from long-term empty homes, flats above shops and town centre sites will be fully re-assessed in the process.

- **Renewable Energy Assessment:** Planning Policy Service have led on producing a Renewable Energy Assessment in line with practice guidance 'Planning for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy'. It looks at the potential output capacity from various renewable energy sources with the aim of aiding the local authority to inform and set future targets and actions throughout the County Borough. The report will be made available during this summer.

Find Out More

For further information on the LDP process, including details on the LDP documents already produced, please visit our website www.conwy.gov.uk/ldp

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