

REPORT OF PLANNING OFFICER (DEVELOPMENT PLANS)

SUBJECT:

CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT ON REVISIONS TO CHAPTER 7 OF PLANNING POLICY WALES – SUPPORTING THE ECONOMY

Purpose of Report

To request Members consider and respond to the Welsh Government's consultation on Revisions to Chapter 7 of Planning Policy Wales – supporting the economy.

Introduction

The consultation seeks views on the Welsh Government's proposed update to national planning policy on supporting the economy, which takes into account many of the recommendations contained in a research report "Planning for Sustainable Economic Renewal" produced by Roger Tym and Partners and Asbri Planning in 2011. The intention is to align policy more closely with the Welsh Government's broader economic policies and try to ensure that the planning system facilitates economic renewal in Wales more effectively.

The Main Changes

The Welsh Government has a legal duty to promote sustainable development – which is comprised of 3 components. The research paper, cited above, highlighted that under certain circumstances there is a perception that the economic component of sustainable development has been overlooked in the decision-making process at the expense of economic and social progress in Wales. The revised policy seeks to redress this perception by stressing the importance of economic redevelopment within the context of sustainable development.

Local planning authorities are required to adopt a more holistic approach to economic development, adopting a 'whole economy' approach by recognising that most development has some economic impact. The needs of the entire economy should therefore be considered including retail, leisure, tourism, sport, recreation and other services as well as the traditional employment uses defined under parts B1 to B8 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order.

The changes focus on the need to ensure that sufficient land is not only available for economic and employment growth but that it is deliverable. This is in line with the procedure for producing Local Development Plans which will deliver identified development proposals within the Plan period. To ensure this, local planning authorities will now be expected to undertake and keep up to date Employment Land Reviews at a local and strategic level in collaboration with other authorities.

As well as ensuring an adequate supply of land the requirement will be to guide and control economic development to facilitate regeneration and promote social and environmental sustainability and to steer economic development to the most appropriate locations, rather than prevent or discourage it.

The policy direction for rural areas is to recognise the contribution that small-scale enterprises and new businesses can bring to the local economy, but also to recognise the need for them generally to be located within or adjacent to defined settlement boundaries. Support should also be given to the expansion of existing businesses in the countryside and the positive approach to farm diversification remains.

The guidance supports the encouragement of a green economy with clustering of industrial and commercial uses benefitting from co-location and favourable consideration of on-site energy consideration.

Consultation response

The Welsh Assembly has prepared a questionnaire for completion in response to the consultation. A draft response has been prepared and is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Recommendation

That Members of the Development Management Committee consider and approve the attached response to the Welsh Government's consultation on Revisions to Chapter 7 of Planning Policy Wales.

Background Papers

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/planning/ppwch7consultation/?lang=en&status=open>

(For further information, please contact Sarah Middleton)

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Draft Response to Revision of Planning Policy Wales Chapter 7 Supporting the Economy – Consultation Document

Q1: Do you agree with the proposed definition of economic development for planning purposes?

PCNPA response: Yes

Q1b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: No

Q2: Do you agree with the Objectives as specified in paragraph 7.1.2?

PCNPA response: Yes

Q2b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: No

Q3: Do you agree that an Employment Land Review is required to provide the evidence base for Local Development Plans?

PCNPA response: Yes.

Q3b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: This work will comply with the need for evidence-based policies and help to maintain up-to-date information for the Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

Q4: Do you agree that Employment Land Reviews should be undertaken collaboratively by local planning authorities, to reflect local economic markets?

PCNPA response: Yes.

Q4b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: This reflects current working practices generally.

Q5: Do you think that policy on economic development in rural areas will help to promote diversification of the economy?

PCNPA response: Don't know.

Q5b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: Please see response to Q7b and Q12b.

Q6: Do you consider that the draft policy will support the growth of the green economy?

PCNPA response: Don't know.

Q6b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: Again it is difficult to know how much impact the policy will have, as there will be many other factors that will influence this change, however the policy position will provide encouragement to positive change.

Q7: Do you agree that the guidance on the content of development plans is sufficiently flexible to allow for local circumstances and changes in the wider economy?

PCNPA response: Yes,

7b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: – Would this change to national policy undermine other WG policies to reduce the need to travel by car and to sustain vitality in town centres? Has the revised policy been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal?

Q8: Do you agree that local authorities should work together, and with other stakeholders to plan strategically for employment land provision?

PCNPA response: Yes.

Q8b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: This is a reflection of current working practices encouraged by the Welsh Government.

Q9: Do you agree with the view that Development Management decisions need to reflect economic considerations more prominently?

PCNPA response: The employment implications of planning applications generally receive very careful consideration in this Authority. Please also see response to Q12b.

Q9b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: No

Q10: Do you think that draft planning policy, as proposed, will be effective in raising the profile of economic issues as part of the Development Management process?

PCNPA response: Yes.

Q10b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: No.

Q11: Do you agree with the list of key factors to be taken into account listed in paragraph 7.6.1 when deciding planning applications?

PCNPA response: Yes.

Q11b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response: No.

Q12: Do you agree that local planning authorities should look favourably on applications for economic development not in accordance with development plans, if the economic benefits outweigh any adverse impacts?

PCNPA response: No.

Q12b: Do you have any further comments?

PCNPA response:

Please refer to National Park purposes, as defined in the 1995 Environment Act which are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks;
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the National Parks] by the public.

These are underpinned by the Sandford Principle which asserts the primacy of the first purpose over the second in cases of irreconcilable conflict. A duty to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park should be fulfilled in the pursuit of Park purposes.

Local development plans are written in accordance with national planning policy, with any differences justified. The local development plan is evidence based and receives thorough testing through the examination process. It also provides for certainty wherever possible. With the Annual Monitoring Report and Plan Review process in place, these mean that local development plans will soon reflect any revision made to Chapter 7 of Planning Policy Wales (or provide justification why they do not do so). The statutory framework to ensure compliance with the local development plan also allows for other material considerations to be taken into account for individual planning proposals. The statement made in para 7.6.2 of the consultation document has the potential to undermine the strategy within an area as it would remove the ability to consider the cumulative impacts of individual planning applications.

Q13: Do you agree with broad headings which the Technical Advice Note should address?

PCNPA response: Yes.

Q14: What further guidance would you like to see contained in the draft technical Advice Note?

PCNPA response: Wait to consider consultation of full content.

Q15: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

PCNPA response: None.