

**BRIDGEND
REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2018-2033)
EXAMINATION**

SCHEDULE OF MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

Matter 10: Good Design and Sustainable Placemaking – Strategic Allocation at Land West of Bridgend (Policies PLA3 and SP2(3))

Issue – Is the allocated Strategic Development Site soundly based and capable of delivering new residential and community development over the Plan period?

a) What is the current use of the Strategic Development Site (SDS)?

The site comprises approximately 37 hectares and consists of open farmland pasture with an area of woodland and enclosed marshland fields to the northeast. The open farmland comprises irregular shaped, small to medium fields of improved grassland with vegetated field boundaries. None of the site comprises Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (as confirmed in SD134 – Agricultural Land Classification Analysis). The wooded part of the site to the northeast is covered by the Laleston Meadows SINC, a local ecological designation. The site and its internal field boundaries in the open farmland include livestock fencing, maintained hedgerows and hedge banks, a tree belt and a stone wall.

b) What is the proposed use of the SDS?

Land West of Bridgend is allocated for a comprehensive green infrastructure led residential development. The site will deliver circa 850 homes, 830 of which during the Plan period (including 20% / 170 affordable housing units), incorporating a new one and a half form entry primary school, recreation facilities, public open space, plus appropriate community facilities all set within distinct character areas.

c) What are the constraints affecting the site, and are these constraints significant obstacles to development within the Plan period?

The constraints affecting the site are detailed within the Implementation and Delivery Appendix to the Replacement LDP, together with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SD77, 2022). However, none are considered significant obstacles to development within the Plan period due to suitable mitigation measures having been identified. The site's supporting evidence has taken all constraints into account to demonstrate the site is both deliverable and viable. The main constraints are summarised below for ease of reference:

Transport Mitigation

The site-specific Transport Assessment (SD155), incorporating a Mobility Strategy, forecasts in the order of 269 and 243 two-way movements in the AM and PM peak hours respectively, although this is considered worst case as attitudinal change towards travel progresses. This quantum of trips equates to just over 4 vehicles per minute two-way, diluted across the local highway network. The assessment concludes that the development provides opportunities to create a new western edge to Bridgend in a self-sustaining site offering community facilities suitable for day to-day living.

The Strategic Transport Assessment (SD95) considered the collective impact of the proposed allocations. As summarised in Background Paper 24: Strategic Transport Assessment (SD56), appropriate mitigation is possible via a s106 contribution and S278 Highway works to enhance the strategic highway network. For Land West of Bridgend, this will include a significant junction improvement scheme at Broadlands Roundabout as well as signal enhancements to the A483 Cowbridge Road/B4265 Ewenny Road/A473 Langenau Strasse/Nolton Street junction, the A473/A48 Roundabout junction, the A473 Waterton Road/Brocastle Avenue/A473 Waterton Road/B4181 Coychurch Road junction and the A473/B4622/Bright Hill junction. Estimated costs of these mitigation measures have been considered as part of the site-specific viability appraisal for Land West of Bridgend, ensuring all transport related constraints can be overcome to enable the development to come forward. The improvements to Broadland Roundabout will include active travel provision.

Air Quality

The air quality impacts associated with the proposed development of the site has been assessed as part of an Air Quality Assessment Report (SD135). The assessment demonstrated that future residents will experience acceptable air quality, with pollutant concentrations below the air quality objectives. Worst-case modelling carried out for the year 2022 suggested a risk of adverse impacts at 6-8 properties along Park Street, as a result of development-generated traffic emissions. However, it is unlikely that any new homes within the development will be occupied before 2024, and the development is unlikely to be complete and thus generating its full traffic volumes until the end of the plan period. Given this, the Air Quality Assessment considered the actual impact of the development at these 8 homes will be negligible in all years from the first occupation in 2024, and that concentrations at these properties will be below the objective in those years. Overall, the operational air quality effects of the proposed development are judged to be 'not significant'.

Notwithstanding the conclusions of the Air Quality Assessment, Park Street has been part of an Air Quality Management Area since 2019. An Air Quality Action

Plan was consulted upon in 2022 and contains various priority mitigation measures to improve air quality. Detailed modelling was commissioned on the mitigation measures that would manage and improve traffic flows through the Park Street AQMA, and in so doing, deliver air quality improvements in the shortest time possible, and reduce levels to as low as reasonably practicable in line with the ambitions of Welsh Government and BCBC. These include optimisation of the Park Street/Angel Street/Tondu Road Junction, which is now the subject of a separate study, and given the AQMA is in place, will need to be mitigated in advance of the plan period to meet air quality targets.

It is acknowledged that there will be some additional vehicular traffic associated with Park Street directly attributed to the site. However, the AQMA is a result of long-established car-orientated policy and the unsustainable 'predict and provide' approach. The Welsh Government is seeking to influence this change in infrastructure intervention and travel behaviour through national policy and legislation. The RLDP allocations have been selected based on their propensity to influence sustainable travel patterns and this includes land West of Bridgend, which is well placed to encourage walking and cycling to the town centre, employment areas and transport interchanges for travel further afield. The identified mitigation for Broadlands Roundabout will include active travel provision which will further enhance these credentials. The site is therefore considered to be part of the solution through the favourable location with which to encourage non-car use.

Ecology

The masterplan for the site has been informed by an ecological desk study and Extended Phase 1 survey has been undertaken by EDP (see SD143). The study notes that within close proximity of the site there are a number of statutorily and non-statutory designated sites present, most notably Laleston Meadows SINC which overlaps with the site itself. However, it is inherent within the emerging masterplan and the requirements contained within Policy PLA3 that the Laleston Meadows SINC and its associated designated features will be retained. Furthermore, such retained features will be further protected from potential harm, damage and disturbance through the sensitive design of built development away from SINC boundaries and inclusion of suitable buffers. The desk study confirms that the inclusion of Laleston Meadows SINC within the Study's Site boundary will provide substantial potential for a balanced provision of areas of informal public open space and wildlife zones. When linked with proposed POS and play areas across the developable site this will provide a significant benefit to both visual and recreational amenity, conservation and biodiversity enhancement.

In respect of the latter, the SINC provides a potential space to accommodate ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancements and thus offset ecological impacts that may arise during the development of adjacent land.

An Extended Phase 1 survey concluded that the site is dominated by agriculturally improved grassland of limited botanical interest and thus of low inherent ecological value. Habitats of greatest ecological importance include the native hedgerows delineating the northern boundary and internal field boundaries in addition to woodland habitat and marshy grassland associated with Laleston Meadows SINC. The roosting bats surveys identified several trees with low to high potential to support a bat roost whilst onsite ponds have been considered for their potential to support great crested newt. The masterplan has sought to locate development across those habitats of predominantly limited ecological value whilst retaining boundary habitats as far as possible. Where retained, such features have been accommodated within proposed informal green space and sustainable transport links, which ultimately enhances connectivity throughout the Site and contributes to the wider green infrastructure resource. Where avoidance is not possible, however, and will result in the loss of internal field boundaries (albeit predominantly species-poor or defunct), the site is considered to be of sufficient size and extent to enable future development proposals to flexibly avoid and/or mitigate for any significant ecological constraints and compensate where necessary. This will be in addition to the sensitive positioning of built development away from retained boundary features to minimise damage.

The report also highlights further detailed habitat and species surveys which are recommended to inform a planning application and ensure proposed mitigation is appropriate and proportional. These include a Dormouse survey, which was raised in comments received from NRW.

Archaeology & Heritage

In terms of archaeological remains, the site is identified as having moderate to high potential to contain remains from the medieval period, particularly in its northern extremity, which is adjacent to the site of the former Llangewydd Church. However, this land is identified as being part of the SINC and will not be developed.

In respect of the Laleston Conservation Area, there will also not be any significant changes to its visual setting. It is acknowledged that development in the southern part of the Site will remove a part of the agricultural landscape around Laleston which forms a buffer from Bryntirion to the east. However, agricultural land will remain on all sides around Laleston, which will retain its character as a discrete settlement, while landscaping measures associated with the development will mitigate any impression of coalescence. This is assessed as an impact of a minor order, with the special interest of the conservation area being retained.

Education Capacity

The development will generate additional school places and could place strain on catchment schools, which may be at capacity at the time of application. The development will therefore meet the needs for the additional school places it generates through on-site provision and financial contributions. The development must provide 1.8 hectares of land to accommodate a 1.5-form entry primary school with co-located nursery facilities and an additional buffer of 0.5ha for future expansion. Financial contributions must also be made to nursery, primary, secondary and post-16 education provision as required by the Local Education Authority, secured through s106 in accordance with the Education Facilities and Residential Development SPG. These requirements are specified within Thematic Policy PLA3 and contributions have been considered as part of the site's independent viability appraisal to certify deliverability.

Utilities

Investment in utility infrastructure will ensure that the site can accommodate the level of development proposed. A Utilities Assessment has been carried out which confirms the presence of 3 spans of overhead electricity power lines and a medium pressure gas main within the site. The report also provides details of potential diversionary work required at the new site entrance off the A473 with regards to electricity mains cables, a water main and Openreach fibre cables. In this regard, Western Power have confirmed that the site can be served with power from their existing primary substation to the east of the site. New 11kV cables will be laid from this location to the site, where the necessary standard distribution substations will be sympathetically located, in accordance with WPD requirements to serve the development. Wales & West have confirmed that their existing Medium Pressure main on site currently has capacity to serve the development. There may also be some capacity to serve an initial phase of build from the Low Pressure network in the A473.

Welsh Water have advised that the wastewater treatment plant has sufficient capacity to accommodate the envisaged foul flows from the proposed development, although additional hydraulic modelling will be required to advise on foul and water supply network capacity, potential connection points and any necessary reinforcement works. The HMA is a standard development requirement and will form part of a future planning submission.

These requirements have been factored into the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (SD77, 2022). National Grid and Welsh Water consider there to be no major constraints regarding the capability of the electricity and gas transmission systems and water and sewerage infrastructure to accommodate the development (refer to respective Statements of Common Ground, SD100 and SD101).

d) In light of the constraints, and having regard to the need to provide affordable housing, is SDS economically viable?

Yes, the site has been subject to rigorous independent viability testing, at a level of detail that is both meaningful and proportionate to the site's significance in the Replacement LDP. The site promoter commissioned Burrows-Hutchinson Ltd to undertake Independent Financial Viability Appraisals using the Development Viability Model; an approach endorsed collectively by Welsh Government, the South East Wales Region and South West Wales Region.

An initial site-specific appraisal was undertaken in 2021, which established the site could meet the proposed Replacement LDP policy requirements in full, while delivering a competitive, market risk adjusted return to the developer and a land value that is sufficient to encourage a landowner to sell for the proposed use. This appraisal was later refreshed in 2022 to consider changes in affordable housing transfer values, market values and construction costs since the original appraisal, plus details from the latest concept masterplans and recommendations from the Strategic Transport Assessment (SD95). This later appraisal reaffirmed the site's viability based on the latest evidence, coupled with realistic and reasonable assumptions concerning costs and values. Both appraisals were undertaken in accordance with the preferred approach set out in Welsh Government's Development Plans Manual (Edition 3), after appropriate consultation on key issues and principles with the site promoter.

The appraisals evidence the site's ability to deliver 20% affordable housing in accordance with the need identified in the LHMA, a 1.5 form entry primary school to meet identified education needs, strategic highway improvements in response to the Strategic Transport Assessment and recreational facilities in accordance with the Replacement LDP policy framework. The appraisals have also demonstrated the site is capable of funding enhanced active travel linkages with the wider Bridgend settlement, a key requirement to provide safe active travel linkages between the site and Bridgend town centre.

This evidence demonstrates the site is financially viable to develop and there are considered to be no impediments to delivery, having full regard to site-specific constraints and the need to provide affordable housing. Refer to the Potential Strategic Sites Independent Financial Viability Appraisals Report (2021) and Updated Financial Viability Appraisals Addendum - Strategic Sites (2022).

e) Are the number of residential units proposed realistic and deliverable over the plan period?

Yes, the site is supported by a proposed illustrative masterplan and proving layout, which were informed by a density level considered to respond most appropriately

to the site-specific context. The masterplan has been refined to enable development parcels or areas to be quantified using a density that engenders character and a clear street hierarchy. This has enabled an accurate calculation of the overall anticipated housing numbers, which has been undertaken on a phased basis, considering land use, green infrastructure, open space, street hierarchy, active travel routes, character and place, built form and key frontages. The development will consist of a range of multi-tenure dwellings at densities ranging from 34 dwellings per hectare up to 43 dwellings per hectare, considered appropriate to enable a population suitable of supporting a sustainable mix of uses contained within a neighbourhood. Refer to SD139(a) Concept Plan Drawings, SD150 Masterplan and SD152 Proving Layout.

The number of residential units proposed is also considered deliverable and 830 dwellings are expected to be delivered within the plan period. The housing trajectory rate has been informed by site-specific evidence on deliverability, viability and phasing analysis in consultation with the site promoter and Housing Trajectory Stakeholder Group. At the most recent Housing Trajectory Stakeholder Group (held on 27/05/2022), there were no outstanding matters of disagreement on the timing and phasing of sites in the plan period. Equally, all strategic site promoters are party to a Statement of Common Ground (SD241, dated 20/12/2022) that confirms all signatories unanimously support the RLDP and consider the strategic allocations sustainable, viable and deliverable in accordance with the submitted housing trajectory.

f) How and when will the proposed new educational facilities be delivered?

The new education facility will be delivered on-site. The developer will be required to provide the land and a financial contribution to the Local Education Authority in accordance with the 2021 Educational Facilities and Residential Development Facilities SPG (or subsequent updates thereof). This has been factored into both the illustrative masterplan and also the site-specific viability appraisals to demonstrate the new facilities are deliverable and have been considered as part of the proposed allocation from the outset. The requirements are specified in PLA3, necessary to render the future development acceptable in principle. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP, SD77, 2022) also provides a single schedule of all infrastructure necessary to render development acceptable in planning terms, including educational facilities. The allocation will need to deliver appropriate supporting infrastructure, as referenced within the IDP, to enable the quantum of proposed development within the plan period to proceed.

The timescales for delivery of the new school will be specified through a s106 agreement, which will be monitored through dwelling occupation thresholds, to ensure timely delivery in dialogue with the Local Education Authority.

g) What are the mechanisms and timescales for delivering the site?

Thematic Policy PLA3 details the site-specific requirements for Land West of Bridgend, set within the context of SP3. This will enable its implementation, in accordance with the Growth and Spatial Strategy identified within SP1 and Strategic Allocations identified within SP2.

The Implementation and Delivery Appendix also sets out the key issues, constraints, phasing and mitigation measures which are required to deliver the site, from which monitoring indicators and triggers have been derived. It provides an overview of site-specific delivery and implementation issues, including site constraints, necessary mitigation and compensation measures. This informs the site's planning, infrastructure and s106 requirements and will ensure clarity for all parties at planning application stage. A s106 agreement will be utilised to outline specific triggers and thresholds for delivery of all planning obligations on the site.

Delivery of the site has been subject to site-specific phasing analysis (in combination with the site promoter and Housing Trajectory Stakeholder Group) to enable development of the housing trajectory. The site is projected to deliver 30 residential units in 2024/25, with 100 residential units per annum thereafter; a total of 830 residential units in the plan period. Occupation of such units will form the basis for setting appropriate s106 triggers to deliver the necessary planning obligations and infrastructure requirements, which will be monitored by the LPA.

h) Is the allocation of the SDS essential to ensure the soundness of the Plan?

Yes, this Sustainable Urban Extension is essential to deliver an appropriate quantum of sustainable development within the Sustainable Growth Area of Bridgend. It accounts for 10% of the total housing provision and exhibits high placemaking credentials in terms of accessibility, availability of amenities and employment provision in the context of the existing population base and position in the settlement hierarchy. Development of this site will direct growth towards the Primary Key Settlement that exhibits high housing need as identified by the LHMA and will enable delivery of a range of other supporting infrastructure including a new primary school, recreation facilities, highways and active travel enhancements, including strategic improvements to the Broadlands Roundabout. This site is supported by extensive viability and deliverability evidence and presents a key opportunity for sustainable new development to take place over the plan period to help meet the LDP Vision and Objectives and ensure implementation of the Regeneration and Sustainable Growth Strategy.