

BRIDGEND
REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2018-2033)
EXAMINATION

SCHEDULE OF MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

Matter 7: Protect and Enhance Distinctive and Natural Places – Built, Historic and Natural Environment

Issue: Does the Plan provide a framework for the management of the built, historic and natural environment that is soundly based, justified and consistent with the requirements of national policy?

Natural Environment

1. Does Policy SP17 provide a clear and consistent framework for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment?

Policy SP17 provides a clear and consistent framework for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. The policy sets out criteria to protect designated sites (at all spatial scales) and to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Development proposals will not be permitted where they have an adverse impact upon the integrity of the countryside, character of the landscape, biodiversity and habitats and the quality of natural resources. It's important to highlight these important issues to ensure all developments have adequately considered them. The weight to be applied to each of the criteria will be considered during the application process where it will be clear which criteria are relevant to the application. The Policy also seeks to protect several statutory designated areas that possess high and/or unique environment quality. Policy SP17 will ensure these areas are protected from inappropriate development which directly or indirectly impacts upon them in line with Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) paragraph 6.4.15. The policy is supported by Planning Policy Wales particularly within the 'Distinctive and Natural Places' theme.

As the plan should be read as a whole, it's important that Policy SP17 is read alongside the development management policies featured underneath this policy, as these provide further detail in order to assess planning applications and interpret what is required in different contexts. Policy SP17 is expanded and supported by a suite of thematic policies (DNP1 – 9) to set out clear requirements for development to minimise pollution, enhance green infrastructure, deliver biodiversity net benefit, enhance ecosystem resilience, protect designated sites, and achieve sustainable management of natural resources.

Overall policy SP17 provides a clear and consistent framework for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Policy SP17 read

alongside the supporting development management policies will help to ensure that new developments are contributing towards achieving the sustainable principles set out within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015).

2. Do Policies SP17 and DNP6 accurately reflect the requirements of national planning policy in respect of net benefit for biodiversity? and should Policy DNP6 be amended to include reference to promoting recreation linkages and promoting active travel?

Policies SP17 and DNP6 have been updated in the submission version of the Written Statement to accurately reflect the requirements of national planning policy in respect of net benefit for biodiversity. Please see SD27 – Written Statement (Marked Changes Since Deposit Stage) and SD28 – Schedule of Minor Changes to the Deposit plan.

The supporting text under Policy DNP6 promotes a range of opportunities identified within the BCBC Local Biodiversity Action Plan (SD60) that development proposals must seek to implement to achieve biodiversity net benefit or ecological enhancement. *‘Promoting recreation linkages, allowing interactions between the population and the open areas’* is a measure identified by the action plan within the supporting text of Policy DNP6 (see paragraph 5.5.40). This measure alongside the other measures identified in the bullet points contained within paragraph 5.5.40 are not in priority order or ranked as to their importance. Amending Policy DNP6 to include reference to promoting recreation linkages and active travel would give the impression of one being more important than the other measures listed. Similarly, to include all measures in the policy wording would make the policy too unwieldy.

3. Are the requirements of Policy DNP5 clear and consistent with national planning policy?

The requirements of Policy DNP5 are considered clear and consistent with national planning policy. Policy DNP5 builds upon Policy SP17 and provides a second tier of protection above that is afforded by national policy. This is necessary to protect those sites defined in the LDP as being of regional or local importance. The regionally and locally important sites identified in Policy DNP5 (which include all designated Local Nature Reserves, SINCs, and identified Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites) are important to biodiversity and the conservation of scientific interest in the County Borough. Policy DNP5 will ensure that developments which would have an adverse impact on these sites will not be permitted unless the benefits associated with the development can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm and/or the harm can be reduced or removed by appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) paragraph 6.4.20 states *“Policies for non-statutory sites should make it clear that such designations do not preclude appropriate developments, where there are no adverse impacts on the features for which a site is designated”*. This

is considered to be in line with Policy DNP5 and is therefore considered to be consistent with national planning policy.

4. Is the reference in Policy DNP7 to ‘Special Trees’ necessary? and consistent with the requirements of national planning policy?

The reference in Policy DNP7 to ‘Special Trees’ can be removed by the inspector if considered necessary.

5. Are the requirements of Policy DNP8 in respect of the provision of green infrastructure assessments clear and based on robust and credible evidence?

The requirements of Policy DNP8 in respect of the provision of green infrastructure assessments are considered clear and based on robust and credible evidence. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) paragraph 6.4.4 requires that *“All reasonable steps must be taken to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems reliance, at an early stage in both development plan preparation and when proposing development, and these should be balanced with the wider economic and social needs of business and communities”*. Furthermore, the Placemaking Charter (2020) emphasises that green infrastructure is a key quality that delivers targeted benefits and should be planned from the start of projects and programmes. The County Borough supports a wealth of Green Infrastructure assets that together comprise the strategic network, which is set out in the Green Infrastructure Assessment 2022 (SD72). Planning Policy Wales paragraph 6.2.8 states *“The Green Infrastructure Assessment should also be given early consideration in development proposals and inform the implementation of projects”*.

Policy DNP8 seeks to ensure that Bridgend’s green infrastructure assets as set out in the Green Infrastructure Assessment are valued, protected, enhanced and managed through a green infrastructure network. DNP8 requires all major developments to submit a Green Infrastructure Assessment. Major developments are developments of 10 residential units or more. Development proposals will be expected to enhance existing Green Infrastructure assets. Such schemes will be designed to take into account the existing green infrastructure assets to ensure no fragmentation or loss of connectivity whilst maximising ecosystem resilience and ecosystem services. In some instances, it may be necessary to create new green infrastructure and create connections to the existing green infrastructure network: improved connectivity through footpaths and cycle routes; space for nature that contributes to the local or sub-regional pattern of connected habitat, and imaginative recreational facilities that give educational and physical health benefits to local people. The supporting text of Policy DNP8 provides a clear breakdown of the requirements that are expected to be assessed as part of undertaking a green infrastructure assessment.

Further guidance on Green Infrastructure as part of development will be prepared as Supplementary Planning Guidance in support of the sustainable placemaking and the creation of high quality and biodiverse living environments.

Built and Historic Environment

6. Are the requirements of Policy DNP1 clear and consistent with national planning policy?

Policy DNP1 sets out the requirements of development in the countryside, highlighting the need to protect the open countryside from inappropriate development by defining the few exceptions to permissible development outside. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) paragraph 3.60 states that *“Development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access, habitat and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable, in particular where they meet a local need for affordable housing, or it can be demonstrated that the proposal will increase local economic activity. However, new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans must continue to be strictly controlled. All new development should be of a scale and design that respects the character of the surrounding area.”* The approach of Policy DNP1 is in line with principles set out in paragraph 3.60 of Planning Policy Wales to strictly control development within the open countryside. Overall, it's considered that the criteria contained within Policy DNP1 will ensure that development in the countryside is strictly controlled.

7. Should Policy SP18 refer to ‘preserve and enhance’ rather than ‘promote or enhance’ the significance of heritage assets?

Agreed.

8. Are Policies DNP 10 and 11 locally distinct or do they replicate the requirements of national planning policy?

The above policies are considered to provide a suitable and reasonable local response to the guidance and intentions set out in national policy. Both policies seek to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations.

Policy DNP10 will ensure that the character of historic buildings and structures will be safeguarded and conserved and change managed so that their special architectural and historic or archaeological interest and their settings are

preserved. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11) paragraph 6.1.2 sets out several examples of what can constitute an historic asset, all of which are present within the County Borough and feature within Policies DNP10 and DNP11. Criteria 1 of Policy DNP10 follows the guidance set out by Planning Policy Wales paragraph 6.1.10 which seeks the preservation and enhancement of Listed Buildings. Criteria 2 seeks to protect or enhance Historic Assets of Special Local Interest following the guidance set out by Planning Policy Wales paragraph 6.1.18. Criteria 3 seeks to preserve Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings which follows the guidance of Planning Policy Wales paragraph 6.1.23. Lastly, criteria 4 seeks to protect and conserve historic landscapes, parks and garden of which follows guidance relating to Planning Policy Wales paragraphs 6.1.18 & 6.1.20. The supporting text of Policy DNP10 sets out the number of assets located within the County Borough.

Policy DNP11 follows the guidance set out by paragraph 6.1.14 of Planning Policy Wales which sets a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas of their settings. DNP11 provides positive management of conservation areas within the County Borough ensuring that development within a conservation area preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. Proposals for demolition will need separate Conservation Area Consent. The Council will also seek to prepare further Conservation Area Appraisals to identify the essential architectural or historic elements to be protected.