

### **Consultation Response Form**

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## 1. NDF Outcomes (chapter 3)

The NDF has proposed 11 Outcomes as an ambition of where we want to be in 20 years' time.

- Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree the 11 Outcomes are a realistic vision for the NDF?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- To what extent do you agree with the 11 Outcomes as ambitions for the NDF?

Agree with all of them	Agree with most of them	Agree with some of them	Agree with none of them	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If you disagree with any of the 11 Outcomes, please tell us why:

The Outcomes within the Draft NDF are overly general. The outcomes which are sought are reliant on complex multiple influences, many of which fall outside the remit of land use planning.

Given the Draft NDF has development plan status (and sets the framework for SDPs and LDPs, which will need to conform with the NDF but will also be subject to tests of soundness and examination in public), we would seriously question whether the outcomes set by the Draft NDF are based upon a proportionate and sound evidence base and whether they are deliverable.

Given the general, and sometimes competing, nature of the outcomes, and the lack of robust evidence from which they are founded, it will be impossible for lower tier plans to demonstrate general conformity with them.

Should the proposed outcomes still be sought, we consider that they would be better phrased as 'objectives' against which the NDF seeks to contribute towards.

In any case, there is a need for the Draft NDF's outcomes to better balance environmental with social and economic considerations. For example, there is no reference to the need to provide quality housing for all within the proposed outcomes – despite this being identified as one of the five priority areas for cross-government working which have the greatest potential contribution to long-term prosperity and well-being within the Welsh Government's Prosperity for All and

## Economic Action Plan.

The Vision previously expressed in an earlier consultation on the NDF included that:

*"By 2040, we will help meet the wellbeing goals for current and future generations by ensuring Wales is a nation of:*

*active and social places, where spatial choices have **supported the delivery of housing to meet society's needs**, in connected, accessible communities"* (emphasis added)

This Vision aligned with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10, which at Paragraph 4.4.2 states:

*"The planning system must provide for an adequate and continuous supply of land, available and suitable for development to meet society's current and future needs."*

If the Welsh Government is to address the current housing crisis in Wales, meet its commitment on housing delivery and support the aspirations of the growth deals within the regions (such as the Cardiff Capital Region and Swansea Bay City Deals), it is essential that the NDF includes an outcome with a focus on providing a range and choice of quality housing (both open market and affordable). In the context only a handful of LPAs being able to meet the Welsh Government's minimum 5-year housing land supply requirement, it is essential that the NDF places emphasis on housing land supply and delivery via a range and choice of sites of varying scales. Despite the recent record of there being a significant shortage of readily deliverable, developable and available housing sites in Wales on which to develop, there is no mention within the NDF or its evidence base to housing land supply. We would seriously question how grounded the NDF can be in the absence of considering existing circumstances which are material to the achievement of the outcomes proposed.

## Energy Policies

We strongly believe that the NDF presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and it is imperative that the Welsh Government gets the NDF 'right first-time round'. The recent Ofgem 'State of the Energy Market 2019' report highlights that decarbonisation of energy has retracted to its slowest rate of decline since 2012, and to meet carbon budget commitments from 2023 onwards, more investment in low-carbon generation is required, including onshore wind and solar.

The Committee on Climate Change has warned that a raft of new policies, and 'substantial renewables deployment between now and 2030' will be necessary to hit the 2050 carbon targets. It is imperative that action is taken now and the Welsh Government's 'Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales' report states (under Policy 6) that the NDF will ensure that the planning system in Wales plays a key role in facilitating clean growth and decarbonisation and will help to build resilience to the

impacts of climate change.

This clearly highlights the importance of the NDF to the decarbonisation agenda and the need for it to maximise its ability to facilitate the development of a low carbon energy system.

We consider that the NDF as currently drafted does not go far enough to emphasise the urgency of the current climate situation, nor does it provide the policy landscape that will establish Wales as a leader in renewable and low carbon energy development and decarbonisation. This is not to say that it cannot be fixed, however, and with some changes, the NDF can be made fit for purpose. It is important that the mistakes made in TAN8 are not repeated – as a policy document TAN8 is long overdue for replacement as it has failed to deliver the level of wind farm development it was intended to. It is critical that the NDF is as robust and positive as possible, and provides a policy environment which maximises the potential for success.

The 11 NDF Outcomes are overarching ambitions based on the national planning principles and national sustainable placemaking outcomes set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW). We recognise that developing a series of Outcomes is key to achieving the spatial strategy over the time period of the framework, but we suggest that the Outcomes should also make reference to a resilient, balanced energy system, and decarbonised transport patterns. Equally, addressing the climate emergency should run through every outcome, not just Outcome 11, which incidentally should be one of the first outcomes, not the last.

Outcome 11 sets out that the climate change challenge demands urgent action on carbon emissions, and that the planning system must help Wales lead the way in promoting and delivering a competitive, sustainable decarbonised society. However, as currently drafted, the NDF does not provide the urgency required, and it fails to recognise that a range of energy generating technologies will be required to deliver a resilient and equitable low carbon economy, with clean and efficient transport infrastructure.

This is further supported by Outcome 7, which demonstrates that all methods of travel will need to have low environmental impact and low emissions. Deployment of ultra-low emission vehicle schemes play an essential role in achieving this outcome.

Considering this, it highlights the importance of ensuring the NDF facilitates delivery of renewable and low carbon energy developments to facilitate the transition to a decarbonised economy. Without this, some of the NDF outcomes may not be achieved.

There is widespread governmental support for the transition to a low carbon and

prosperous society through the delivery of low carbon and renewable energy sources. On the 12th of June 2019, the Welsh Government announced its commitment to reducing carbon emission levels by 95% by 2050 and to seek to be carbon zero by 2050. Indeed, the Welsh Government's 'Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan' (December 2017) states:

*"the shift towards a low – carbon future offers huge opportunities for our economy to diversify and grow – but it also challenges us to support business, people and places in transitioning toward that low carbon future".*

In March 2019, the Welsh Government published 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Future'. This plan sets the foundations for Wales to transition to a low carbon nation and sets out how it aims to meet the first carbon budget (2016 – 2020) and consequently the 2020 interim target through 100 policies and proposals. The vision of this plan states that:

*"in 2050, there will be different energy systems that will be ready to fully exploit the inter-relationships and synergies between the power, heat and transport sectors and we will also see greater energy efficiency in buildings and appliances, and the use of new building fabrics turning buildings into power stations".*

The NDF is identified within 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Future' under Policy 6 as follows:

*"the NDF will ensure the planning system in Wales plays a key role in facilitating clean growth and decarbonisation and helps build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Achieving our strategic decarbonisation goals is highlighted as a key driver, which all development plans must support."*

This highlights just how critical the NDF will be to decarbonisation of the Welsh economy, and how critical it is that the Welsh Government publishes a framework that will deliver.

## 2. Spatial Strategy (policies 1 - 4)

The NDF **spatial strategy** is a guiding framework for where large-scale change and nationally important developments will be focused over the next 20 years.

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the spatial strategy and key principles for development in...

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	No opinion
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Urban areas (Policies 1, 2 & 3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural areas (Policy 4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If you have any comments on the spatial strategy or key principles for development in urban and rural areas, please tell us:

The Spatial Strategy does not include Monmouthshire as part of a National Growth Area, and whilst the map depicting the strategy is illustrative it appears that the majority / if not all of the Vale of Glamorgan lies outside of the Growth Area.

Further clarity should be provided on the geographical extent of the growth areas. In any case, there is a lack of evidence or rationale to justify why some areas are included within the Growth Area, whereas other areas are excluded despite them having a track record of delivering a greater proportion of homes (market and affordable).

The unambitious and overly restrictive nature of the NDF (restricting growth to certain areas) represents a missed opportunity for positive growth that can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Whilst the NDF is not subject to 'tests of soundness' in the same manner that SDPs and LDPs are, should the NDF be examined in such a way, we consider that it would be found unsound as its vision and strategy are not positive and sufficiently aspirational.

### **Urban areas (Policies 1, 2 & 3)**

#### *Policy 1 – Sustainable Urban Growth*

Policy 1 seeks to direct new growth towards urban areas. Whilst this is welcomed in principle and has been a longstanding feature of planning policy for a number of years, the policy lacks any balance and does not recognise that release of land outside of settlements (supported by appropriate infrastructure which can benefit existing places) is sometimes inevitable and can result in sustainable development rather than the sprawling development as stated within the NDF.

The NDF is not based on a proportionate evidence base and is not supported by any urban capacity study to evidence the deliverability of focussing growth towards urban areas or transport nodes.

Currently, national policy allows consideration of suitable and sustainable greenfield sites within or on the edge of settlements, alongside new settlements in the open countryside in exceptional circumstances (PPW Edition 10 Para 3.40 refers). This recognises that there is a need to provide a range and choice of sites to ensure that there is a deliverable supply of housing to satisfy each Council's housing requirement.

There is currently a relatively even balance of greenfield and brownfield sites within adopted LDPs in the region – at around 50% greenfield, 50% brownfield. Despite this balance of allocated sites, only two Local Planning Authorities are able to demonstrate a five year supply and there exists a significant shortfall of housing across South East Wales with issues of deliverability impacting upon supply.

The NDF proposes a greater focus on brownfield development than that already allocated without being based on any evidence to confirm that this approach/strategy is deliverable. Indeed, evidence from the South East Wales' authorities latest (2019) JHLAS indicates that, despite allocations within LDPs being evenly split in terms of greenfield to brownfield ratio, the vast majority of sites where development is not deliverable (and defined as being within Category 4 in the JHLAS) are previously developed (rather than being greenfield).

This illustrates the issues associated with focussing on brownfield land, particularly given the greater emphasis on deliverability and front-loading of viability recently introduced as part of changes to national planning policy.

Accordingly, if the NDF's bias towards urban regeneration (and lack of any greenfield balance) were to be scrutinised against the 'tests of soundness' it would not meet the following tests & questions (as set out in the LDP Manual):

*Test 2: Is the plan appropriate?*

- *Is it supported by robust, proportionate and credible evidence?*
- *Is it logical, reasonable and balanced?*

*Test 3: Will the plan deliver*

*Will it be effective?*

- *Can it be implemented?*
- *Will development be viable?*
- *Can the sites allocated be delivered?*
- *Is the plan sufficiently flexible? Are there appropriate contingency provisions?*

Given that SDPs and LDPs which will need to conform with the NDF will be the subject of the above tests of soundness, the NDF as drafted will seriously undermine the ability to prepare a sound development plan at the lower tiers. This

will have a consequential effect on confidence in the plan-led system and the delivery of much-needed homes.

The commentary on new settlements (page 22 refers) is too prescriptive in the NDF. where it states: *"Choosing to develop new towns and enabling sprawling greenfield development would be to ignore the untapped potential of places which already have town centres, universities and colleges, public transport infrastructure and a good range of public services. It would also squander key assets in the form of productive countryside and natural resources"* (page 22 refers). This seems to run counter to PPW which outlined that there are exceptional circumstances where they may be appropriate. The text within the NDF is not evidence-based and should reflect the policy in PPW recognising there may be a role for new settlements if they create more sustainable places than urban sprawl at the edge of existing settlements. The Cardiff Capital Region Strategic Business Plan (February 2018), which has been prepared and endorsed by the ten local authorities within the region, provides support for new settlements in the region identifying that:

*"In some parts of the region there is potential to explore the development of new settlements (settlements of the future) which would combine housing, employment, education and leisure elements in a planned, sustainable development of significant scale"* (emphasis added)

Additionally, several local authorities previously identified support for the opportunity of new settlements through the NDF Call for Evidence and Projects consultation, as follows:

Vale of Glamorgan Council: *"At this juncture, alternative solutions to meeting housing needs will need to be considered and in this regard, opportunities for new settlements may be appropriate in Wales"*;

Caerphilly County Borough Council: *"As part of the consideration of the settlement hierarchy and developing a national strategy for economic growth, the NDF should consider the issue of whether one or more New Settlements/Towns provide the appropriate opportunity to assist in delivering the NDF goals. New Settlements/Towns are highly contentious, but have not been identified in the development arena for nearly 70 years and, whilst highly controversial, the NDF should not pass on the opportunity to seriously consider this issue."*

As set out in PPW, new settlements could be given detailed consideration as part of SDP preparation, and it is not appropriate for the NDF to stymie such opportunities. – not least given the support by a number of local authorities and at the regional-level. Surely given the current housing crisis in Wales we should allow SDPs/LDPs the full range of policy options to identify the most suitable strategy to meet their housing (and other) needs.

### *Policy 3 – Public Investment, Public Buildings and Publicly Owned Land*

This policy should be removed because landownership is not a land use planning matter and any public sector land brought forward for development should be subject to the same rigour as private sector land in order to comply with the Draft Development Plan Manual (June 2019). The amplification text to Policy 3 states:

*"Where publicly owned land could support sustainable places, positive consideration should be given to the future use of this land and whether it could, for example, support new mixed use development, including affordable housing and new commercial activities or transport infrastructure."*

Given that no reference is made to landowners outside of the public sector, the inference is that there is a preference for the development of public land over private. Land ownership is not a material planning consideration and it is wholly inappropriate for a development plan to distinguish between landowners.

Where public land has come forward for development, there has often been a lengthy period of promotion with substantial public sector intervention via land assembly and funding. Whilst there is a role for the development of public land, an overreliance on the public sector to deliver homes at the pace and scale needed is likely to worsen issues of housing shortage.

### **Rural Areas (Policy 4)**

The provision of job opportunities and enabling community services to be sustainable will require demographically mixed and resilient communities. Housing and affordable housing retains the working age population to help support employment. An appropriate level of housing should therefore be supported in rural areas.

In respect of rural areas, Draft NDF Outcome 2 states:

*"In rural areas, job opportunities and community services will be supported to help attract and retain people. A balance will be found between development and preserving the character of rural Wales, ensuring our small towns and villages have bright futures as attractive places to live and work. There will be support for the agricultural sector and its supply chains to boost resilience through diversification."*

As set out earlier in these representations, the Outcomes do not make any reference to housing and the same criticism applies to Policy 4. The policy should therefore make reference to rural communities having appropriate access to a range and choice of housing.

The supporting text to Policy 4 recognises that *"priority should be given to*

*economic activities with strong links to rural areas, including food and drink processing and energy generation".*

It is our view that energy generation must also be included within the text of the policy itself to ensure there is no ambiguity over the role of energy generation in the rural economy.

### 3. Affordable Housing (policy 5)

The NDF sets out the approach for providing affordable housing, encouraging local authorities, social landlords, and small and medium-sized construction and building enterprises to build more homes.

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to increasing affordable housing?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If you disagree, in what other ways can the NDF approach the delivery of affordable housing?

Within the Overview and Challenges section of the draft NDF it states:

*"The Welsh Government is targeting its housing and planning interventions towards achieving this aim within the broader context of increasing supply and responding to different needs."*

Despite referring to 'increasing supply and responding to different needs', the draft NDF only provides support towards the delivery of affordable homes, which by their nature can only respond to one element of housing need. No support is provided for the delivery of open market housing despite the private sector playing a key role in the delivery of affordable housing in Wales. The Draft NDF is dismissive of private-led delivery of affordable housing stating:

*"To address both the 'delivery gap' and housing need in Wales, a shift in the delivery model is required by building affordable homes at scale and pace. The gap has widened since greater reliance has been placed on the private sector to meet this basic human need."*

Despite dismissing the private sector, the draft NDF does not identify an alternative model of delivery, nor is any evidence provided to demonstrate that a 'shift in the delivery model' would be effective.

An overreliance on brownfield industrial legacy sites and aspirational sites in off-market areas have resulted in housing shortages being experienced. Notwithstanding this, there exist numerous examples where private-led delivery has resulted in significant affordable housing provision being achieved.

The Draft NDF states that the need identified for Wales up to 2038 based on the central estimate is 114,000 homes with it being estimated that during the initial five years (2018/19 to 2022/23) *"on average 8,300 additional homes will be required annually...It is estimated under the central estimate that on average 47% of additional homes should be affordable housing (social housing or intermediate rent) throughout 2018/19 to 2022/23, with the remaining 53% being market housing."*

The estimates of housing need assume two key elements: newly arising need is calculated from the 2014 based variant household projections; and existing Unmet need – is said to equate to the sum of both those in homeless accommodation as at latest estimates, and the number of households that were overcrowded and concealed as at the 2011 Census.

Each of the underlying variant population projections (underpinning the newly arising need calculation) assume a decline in the working age population (16-64) of Wales of between -2% and -7%, and little growth (in some cases decline) in the child age population. By way of comparison, the same projection series for England projects growth of 6.5% in the population 16-64.

Use of trend-based household projections in areas of low growth, leads to a perpetual state of decline in the projections over time – demonstrated by the significant ageing of the population (as above). Moreover, calculations of existing unmet need are just that – they fail to take account of ongoing levels of unmet need (homelessness and concealed households) that has occurred since 2011, and which are built into the future household projections.

By way of comparison, the level of housing need (without any adjustment for economic & infrastructure aspirations) set by the Draft NDF for the whole of Wales (114,000), is less than that of Gloucestershire County Council's administrative area (115,200) and the West of England Joint Spatial Plan area (116,500).

Whilst we appreciate that the level of need in neighbouring areas in England is identified using a different methodology, the housing need proposed in the Draft NDF would likely result in the rate of housebuilding in South East Wales continuing to fall behind the other areas of the Great Western Powerhouse.

The statistical release of the Estimates of Housing Need confirms that they "should not be used as housing targets". The NDF needs to make this statement as well. However, it is not appropriate to use the central estimates - if housing need were

to be set at these levels, it is likely to lead to further decline of the working age population and issues of affordability and need. It should moreover be made clear that it is not the role of the draft NDF to set a housing requirement with PPW 10 seeking to link homes and jobs stating that: *"Appropriate consideration must also be given to the wider social, economic, environmental and cultural factors in a plan area"* when setting housing requirements (PPW Edition 10 Para 4.2.7 refers). This is particularly the case given the lack of aspirational growth within the NDF to support & facilitate the economic and infrastructure objectives of the City Deals within Wales which are described as a 'once in a generation' opportunity. The NDF should therefore help to facilitate these initiatives rather than limit their potential.

The Swansea Bay City Deal comprises a £1.3 billion investment which seeks to create 10,000 jobs, whilst the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is a £1.28 billion programme, which aims to create 25,000 new jobs, leverage £4bn private sector investment and achieve a five per cent uplift in the region's GVA<sup>1</sup>. The City Deal has several wide-ranging benefits, as outlined within the Growth & Competitiveness Commission: Report and Recommendations<sup>2</sup>. In respect of the delivery of housing, the Report states:

- *"Housing is critical to the functionality of city-region systems and the operation of labour markets in particular"* (emphasis added); and
- *"The evidence suggests that the planning process is currently viewed as **overbearing and disincentivising to housebuilders**. This results in a fragmented approach to housebuilding, with smaller scale developments being the norm and scale developments seen as difficult to deliver. This in turn is **limiting the flow of investment funding into housebuilding in Wales**, an approach that has proven successful in other UK city-regions."* (emphasis added).

The Cardiff Capital Region Strategic Business Plan<sup>3</sup>, which has been prepared and endorsed by the ten local authorities within the region, identifies that:

*"The housing shortfall of the region, linked to the future economic aspirations of the Regional Cabinet, is being full explored and detailed as an expression of 'need'... [the Regional Cabinet will] promote access to a range of housing, including affordable... Having a range of housing choice can stimulate latent housing markets, with long term benefits to communities."*

The implication is that housing numbers should be increased where this will enable the resident labour force supply to match projected job growth. Moreover, Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development (2014) states that *"economic land uses also include construction, including housebuilding"* and that *"recognising the*

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<sup>1</sup> CCR City Deal Strategic Business Plan Wider Investment Fund, February 2018

<sup>2</sup> The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal: Growth & Competitiveness Commission: Report and Recommendations, January 2017

<sup>3</sup> CCR City Deal Strategic Business Plan Wider Investment Fund, February 2018

*whole-economy contribution to economic growth is therefore important”.*

It is accordingly considered that the NDF should properly align housing and economic aspirations to ensure that the benefits of City Deal investment are properly harnessed and that housing need is met.

#### 4. Mobile Action Zones (policy 6)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree the identification of mobile action zones will be effective in encouraging better mobile coverage?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- If you disagree, in what other ways can the NDF improve mobile phone coverage in the areas which currently have limited access?

#### 5. Low Emission Vehicles (policy 7)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree that policy 7 will enable and encourage the roll-out of charging infrastructure for ultra-low emission vehicles?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If you disagree, in what other ways can the NDF enable and encourage the roll-out of charging infrastructure for ultra-low emission vehicles?

#### 6. Green Infrastructure (policies 8 & 9)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and ecological networks?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 7. Renewable Energy and District Heat Networks (policies 10-15)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the NDF's policies to lower carbon emissions in Wales using...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
Large scale wind and solar developments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
District heat networks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If you disagree with the NDF's approaches to green infrastructure, renewable energy or district heat networks, what alternative approaches should we consider to help Wales to enhance its biodiversity and transition to a low carbon economy?

There are a number of aspects of Policies 10-15 which require refinement and clarification in order to ensure that the NDF will maximise its potential to deliver energy generating development in line with the Welsh Government's targets and the outcomes of the NDF. As a starting point, it is considered that the climate emergency is not given sufficient weight within the document. Tackling the climate change emergency should run through all the outcomes in the NDF rather than just the last one, Outcome 11.

The proposed amendments below are based on our experience and seek to address potential consenting difficulties in terms of policy interpretation and application and, in doing

so, increase developer certainty.

As a general comment, it is considered that the NDF should have numbered paragraphs to make reference to the document easier and clearer in practical terms, particularly in the decision-making process. Page 6 of the NDF document notes that the NDF is the "*highest tier of development plan*" and that it comprises the framework which will provide the basis for Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs) at local planning authority (LPA) level. Within the current draft, the NDF makes it clear that SDPs and LDPs must be in accordance with it, however, its status in decision-making on developments of national significance (DNS) is not explicitly set out.

It is our view that the NDF's status in the development plan hierarchy and the decision-making process (and the weight that should therefore be attached to it) must be clearly set out in the document in the interests of clarity and certainty for all stakeholders, including decision-makers, statutory consultees, members of the public and applicants (and their investment partners).

The proposals for a new infrastructure planning regime in Wales<sup>4</sup> state that decisions on nationally significant scale development, i.e. DNS, will be taken in accordance with the NDF. There should be an explicit and unequivocal statement in the NDF that for any applications falling within the DNS regime, the NDF constitutes the development plan in line with Section 38(4) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004<sup>5</sup> (PCPA 2004), and that DNS decisions made by the Welsh Ministers must be in accordance with the NDF unless material considerations indicate otherwise (s38(6) PCPA 2004). It is imperative that this is stated explicitly within the NDF.

**Extracts from the NDF**

*"The NDF is a spatial plan, which means it sets a direction for where we should be investing in infrastructure and development for the greater good of Wales and its people."* NDF Introduction

*"The spatial strategy is the overarching framework for deciding where to locate nationally significant developments, in order to maximise their contribution to the well-being goals."* NDF Introduction

We support the need for national policy to set the direction for future infrastructure investment. However, although it is referred to as a "spatial plan", the NDF is only spatial in respect of policies relating to the development of wind and solar energy (Policies 10, 11 and 12).

Beyond the 'traffic-light' approach to onshore wind and solar in Policies 10, 11 and 12, the NDF makes provision for other types of renewable generating stations over 10MW (Policy 13). It is our view that the NDF should also include policies relating to all types of DNS not just renewable energy generation projects (e.g. *overhead grid connections up to 132kV*, conventional generating stations >10MW, pumped hydroelectric storage schemes, underground gas storage facilities, facilities for liquid natural gas (LNG), gas reception

<sup>4</sup> <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-04/180430-changes-to-the-approval-of-infrastructure-development.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/38#commentary-key-f1f801ef2bf2cf4dff9896b62a5503a7>

facilities, airports, railways, rail freight interchanges, dams and reservoirs, transfer of water resources, waste water treatment plants and hazardous waste facilities<sup>6</sup>). As the development plan for DNS applications (which is intended to set a framework through to 2040), the NDF should proactively set policy for all types of infrastructure, not simply react to ones that are currently on the DNS register.

The lack of a solid decision-making framework for all types of DNS is a major short-coming, particularly when LDPs will typically not include policy provisions against which these types of development can be determined. It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to include policies relating to these types of projects in the first iteration of the NDF, but they should, at the very least, be included at the first NDF review

**Extract from NDF**

*"The NDF should be read alongside Planning Policy Wales (PPW) which provides planning policy on an all-Wales basis. The NDF complements PPW, with a shared commitment to placemaking and by setting out the spatial priorities for planning and development where national-level consideration is required."* NDF Introduction

**4.9** The relationship between the NDF and PPW also needs to be clarified. In decision-making terms, and in line with s38(6) of the PCPA 2004, the NDF constitutes the development plan and PPW constitutes a material consideration. It cannot be said therefore that the NDF "*complements*" PPW. We recommends that the relationship between the policy documents is made clear and reference is made to s38 of the PCPA 2004 to remove any ambiguity. The NDF should make a clear statement that DNS applications will be determined in accordance with the NDF unless material considerations, including PPW, indicate otherwise.

With respect to the types of large scale energy developments that will fall to be determined within the Developments of National Significance (DNS) regime, the NDF defines these as:

- *All onshore wind generation over 10 megawatts (MW); and*
- *Other renewable energy generation sites with generating power between 10MW and 350MW".*

This statement is inaccurate as the DNS regime includes any energy generation between 10MW and 350MW, not just renewables. Therefore, WE requests that the word '**renewable**' in the second bullet point is deleted. WE also considers that reference should include overhead grid connections of up to 132kv.

It is critical that Wales continues to have secure and reliable supplies of electricity throughout the transition to a low carbon economy, whilst also replacing existing power plants due for closure. To manage the risks to achieving security of supply, sufficient electricity capacity (including a greater proportion of low carbon generation) is required to meet demand, and this requires a diverse mix of technologies and fuels.

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) published its National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) in July 2018, which presents recommendations for a programme of upgrades to the nation's infrastructure. The NIC believes there is significant scope to build resilience through intelligent deployment of a mix of renewables working alongside sources

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<sup>6</sup> The Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales) Regulations 2016 (as amended)

of flexibility such as storage, interconnectors with other countries, and demand side response. It is acknowledged that the NIA predominantly applies to England, but there are clear parallels to be drawn with Wales in the absence of any similar assessment by the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW).

As currently drafted, the NDF does not include any reference to the range of technologies required to deliver a resilient and flexible energy system. Given the Welsh Government's target to generate 70% of electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030, the absence of policies or narrative relating to conventional generation (i.e. the remaining 30%), storage and grid balancing is a significant omission. It also fails to recognise the potential for hybrid projects to come forward which incorporate wind, solar and energy storage.

A consistent approach to the Welsh Government's position on non-devolved projects<sup>7</sup> would also be welcomed – in this context, the NDF only mentions nuclear projects. Although the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) is the primary development plan for devolved offshore projects (<350MW), the NDF should include support of non-devolved projects (>350MW), subject to acceptable environmental impacts, including offshore wind (as is currently the case at paragraph 3.1 of TAN8) and tidal lagoons. Local planning authorities and the Welsh Ministers are statutory consultees for non-devolved projects determined under the Planning Act 2008. Additionally, planning permission is likely to be required for onshore installations associated with offshore projects and the NDF should also include narrative in support of such installations subject to acceptable environmental impacts. In these cases, the synchronisation of onshore and offshore consenting (including marine licences) would be welcomed.

The lack of policy for non-devolved projects creates a practical consenting difficulty. The decision making process for non-devolved energy generating projects is reliant on s104 and s105 of the Planning Act 2008. These sections state that application for development consent for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) should be determined in accordance with the relevant National Policy Statement (NPS) where one is designated (s104), or important and relevant matters where there is no designated NPS for the technology proposed (s105). If determined under s105, the important and relevant matters would include the NDF, SDPs and LDPs and if these are silent on the type of technology proposed (for example, this is the case for hydroelectric pumped storage) then the policy case which supports schemes that could be critical to an energy system with a high proportion of renewables is extremely unclear. It is essential that the NDF provides policy support for all technologies required as part of a renewables-based energy system whether they are DNSs or NSIPs.

The NDF adopts a '*clear traffic light-based approach to its policy on large scale and wind and solar renewable energy projects*'. According to the NDF, a strategic review of landscape impact identified the Energy Priority Areas as the most appropriate locations to accommodate landscape change. However, from our review of all of the consultation documents, it is clear that landscape and visual were not the only constraints applied. This is confirmed by Paragraph 3.1 of ARUP's Stage 1 Report (Development of Priority areas for wind and solar energy) which sets out that "*The development of the methodology has been an iterative process, with input from stakeholder workshops, Arup experts, stakeholder engagement, and meetings with the Welsh Government core team*".

It is our view that the traffic light approach is misleading, fails to provide a clear position on

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<sup>7</sup> Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) determined under the Planning Act 2008

where development will come forward and should be removed from the NDF in favour of criteria based policies.

The draft NDF sets out that the spatial strategy is for large scale and solar development to be directed towards the defined Energy Priority Areas for Wind and Solar. These areas provide a presumption in favour of large scale on shore wind and solar energy development, and an acceptance of landscape change and a focus on maximising benefits and minimising impacts.

We recognise the Welsh Government's desire to identify suitable areas to assist in determining where grid upgrade and reinforcement may be required to enable the deployment of renewables, but is concerned that the current policy drafting may suggest that the identified areas are developable in their entirety. This is not the case.

For the spatial dimension provided by the Energy Priority Areas to function effectively, it is critical that the policy approach is founded on a robust evidence base if it is to deliver the Welsh Government's commitment to maximising Wales' potential for decarbonisation. The NDF does confirm that not all of the area within the Energy Priority Areas are suitable for the generation of renewable energy. We are concerned, however, that the Welsh Government do not understand the level of deliverability within the priority areas. This presents a very real risk that the policy approach will not deliver the scale of renewable development required to meet the Welsh Government's targets. This is a position that the Welsh Government must avoid at all costs if it is to deliver a decarbonised future.

From a review of the Energy Priority Areas undertaken by RenewablesUK Cymru, it is apparent that once industry-standard site criteria are applied, less than 5% of the identified areas are suitable for the deployment of renewable energy at the scale required to meet Welsh Government targets for decarbonisation. The priority areas also fail to account for the locations of operational wind farms which may need to be repowered during the NDF's lifetime. This raises serious concerns over the robustness of the studies that informed the Energy Priority Areas, and demonstrates the inherent danger in taking a high-level approach to constraints assessment.

We believe that it would be far more effective to provide a criteria-based approach for large scale energy development which allows developers to assess site constraints, characteristics and impacts and provide a robust and justifiable case for development.

This is an approach that has been taken for energy NSIPs in England utilising the National Policy Statements (NPS) which, aside from the NPS for nuclear, do not include any spatial allocations. The NSIP regime has been running for over 10 years and both the regime and the NPSs have been praised for the clarity and certainty they provide.

In light of the above, we believe that the NDF should adopt a more positive position with respect to renewable energy development. It is our view that the priority areas should be removed from the NDF entirely. Proposals across Wales should be given the same level of 'in principle' support as is provided under Policy 10 (as currently drafted) with the exception of the areas identified under Policy 12.

The supporting text to Policy 10 (as drafted) places an importance on the ability of the Energy Priority Areas to deliver in order to meet the Welsh Government's renewable energy targets and that "the implementation of developments *within the Priority Areas* will be monitored". The removal of the Priority Areas will allow development to come forward

across Wales and this will need to be monitored.

We strongly believe that the traffic light approach should be deleted as the terminology used is unhelpful and doesn't reflect the WG's intent. The NDF presents a 'green light' for the priority areas but the current drafting suggests that areas with 'amber lights' are more closely aligned with 'red' than 'green'. We are confident that this was not the intention of the NDF and believes it can be rectified by amending Policies 10 and 11 for the following reasons:

- Policy 10 refers to a presumption in favour of development of large-scale onshore wind and solar development, however, to meet the Welsh Government's targets, this presumption should apply to all renewable and low carbon energy development proposals;
- Policy 10 needs to include a specific statement that the need for large scale renewable and low carbon energy development, together with grid connections and other technologies that will facilitate its deployment, is established and accepted and does not need to be demonstrated at application stage;
- the significant weight that is given to a proposal's contribution to reducing Wales greenhouse gas emissions and meeting their decarbonisation and renewable energy targets should be applied to all renewable energy policies, and any other technologies which facilitate their deployment;
- Policy 10 also sets out that planning applications must demonstrate how local social, economic and environmental benefits have been 'maximised' that adverse impacts must be 'minimised'. This wording creates uncertainty for developers and decision-makers as no definition is provided as to how these thresholds can be achieved. The test is not standard in planning and will simply create confusion and disagreement. This is a policy flaw that needs to be addressed.

The supporting text to Policy 10 should also include reference to the potential environmental benefits that large scale renewable energy projects can deliver, such as contributing to resilient ecological habitats, restoring degraded peatlands and restoring semi-natural grasslands.

The points raised above clearly demonstrate that clarification is required. We recommend that careful consideration is given to the rewording of Policy 10, the deletion of Policy 11 and the rewording or deletion of Policy 13. We welcomes the commitment to issue "*further guidance on the development of on-shore wind and solar energy schemes...*" and would welcome the opportunity to assist the Welsh Government in preparing this guidance.

It is our view that the changes suggested provide the Welsh Government with a significant opportunity to ensure the effective implementation of the NDF – the NDF would provide the strategic 'in principle' support for renewable and low carbon energy generating development and clearly establish the need for such development across Wales. The detailed policy guidance could then establish the matters to be assessed in any planning application made without the need for any spatial element in a similar approach to the energy NPSs in England. We suggest that the Welsh Government considers the assessment criteria included within Annex C of TAN8 and the energy NPSs<sup>8</sup> as a starting point for the impacts to be assessed in connection with large scale energy development.

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<sup>8</sup> National Policy Statement for Overarching Energy (EN-1) / NPS for Renewable Energy (EN-3) / NPS for Electricity Networks (EN-5)

Policy 11 refers to Onshore Wind and Solar Energy outside of the Energy Priority Areas. As discussed above, we understand that the Welsh Government's objective is for the NDF to provide policy support for all renewable and low carbon energy developments outside of the Priority Areas, but neither Policy 11 nor Policy 13 state this explicitly. We therefore suggest the following policy amendments:

- Delete policy 11 entirely, reword or delete Policy 13 and apply Policy 10 (subject to amendment to a criteria based approach) to renewable and low carbon energy development across the whole of Wales (except the areas covered by Policy 12). If Policy 10 is just to apply to renewable energy then we would suggest that Policy 13 is reworded (in line with our suggestion for Policy 10 below) and applies to low carbon and non-renewable energy generation.

***New Policy 10: Large Scale Renewable & Low Carbon Energy Development***

*The Welsh Government supports large scale onshore renewable and low carbon energy development. There is a presumption in favour of development for these schemes across Wales outside of the areas identified by Policy 12. With respect to the development of large scale wind and solar, there is also an associated acceptance of landscape change for schemes outside the areas identified by Policy 12.*

*When determining planning applications for large scale low carbon and renewable energy development, significant weight will be given to the proposal's contribution to:*

- *reducing Wales' greenhouse gas emissions and meeting decarbonisation and renewable energy targets*
- *delivering wider environmental, social and economic benefit*
- *satisfying an identified need for renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure*
- *facilitating the deployment of large scale renewable energy development*

*Planning applications must demonstrate the proposal is acceptable in social, economic and environmental terms and that there are no unacceptable adverse effects on, or due to, the following (where relevant to the technology proposed):*

- *landscape and visual;*
- *biodiversity, ecology and nature conservation*
- *geo-environmental;*
- *historic environment;*
- *traffic and transport;*
- *noise and vibration*
- *residential amenity;*
- *Socio-economic*
- *Air quality and emissions*
- *telecommunications, aviation and defence;*
- *hydrology, hydrogeology, the water environment and flood risk;*
- *waste; and*
- *cumulative impact.*

*Suitable access to the site for construction and maintenance purposes must be provided. Plans must also be in place for the end of the development's lifetime, including the decommissioning of the site at the end of its operational life.*

In addition to the revised policy, it is also suggested that the following text is added to the supporting text to Policy 10 to provide clarity to the issues to be considered in the planning

balance:

*In considering any proposed development, and in particular when weighing its adverse impacts against its benefits, the Welsh Ministers should take into account:*

- *its potential benefits including its contribution to meeting the need for energy infrastructure, job creation and any long-term or wider benefits; and*
- *its potential adverse impacts, including any long-term and cumulative adverse impacts, as well as any measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for any adverse impacts.*

*In this context, the decision-maker should take into account environmental, social and economic benefits and adverse impacts, at national, regional and local levels.*

In summary, we agree with the objectives of NDF Policies 10 – 14 but considers that the support provided to energy generating development needs to be strengthened and a recognition of the mix of technologies required to deliver a flexible, resilient, low carbon energy system needs to be added. The NDF must also include a policy against which devolved grid projects (up to 132kV) can be determined. If the NDF is to facilitate the delivery of energy generation at the scale required to meet the Welsh Government targets for decarbonisation, it is critical that policies relating to grid connection are included in the NDF.

The NDF must include a presumption in favour of renewable and low carbon energy development in all areas except those identified under Policy 12.

Policy 15 requires that: *"As a minimum, proposals for large scale, mixed use developments of 100 dwellings or more should consider the potential for a District Heat network"*. In practice, a District Heat Network (DHN) is unlikely to be considered feasible in the majority of proposals, especially for only 100 units. The process of dismissing the feasibility of such schemes would place an undue burden on applicants. In any case, as set out in the Vale of Glamorgan Council's response to the Draft NDF – *"a significant hurdle to financial viability in delivering DHN schemes for domestic use is consumer uptake. Energy Services Providers are likely to have a minimum dwelling uptake to be able to consider taking on a DHN scheme, which in some cases will require as many as 500 dwellings to consider a CHP scheme economically viable"*.

## 8. The Regions (policy 16)

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of developing Strategic Development Plans prepared at a regional scale?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	No opinion
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The NDF identifies three overall regions of Wales, each with their own distinct opportunities and challenges. These are North Wales, Mid and South West Wales, and South East Wales.

## 9. North Wales (policies 17-22)

We have identified Wrexham and Deeside as the main focus of development in North Wales. A new green belt will be created to manage the form of growth. A number of coastal towns are identified as having key regional roles, while we support growth and development at Holyhead Port. We will support improved transport infrastructure in the region, including a North Wales Metro, and support better connectivity with England. North West Wales is recognised as having potential to supply low-carbon energy on a strategic scale.

### ***Policy 17 – Wrexham and Deeside***

Support is provided for Wrexham’s designation as a primary focus for strategic housing and economic growth in North Wales.

### ***Policy 19 – Green Belts in North Wales***

For the reasons outlined above in respect of Policy 30 Green Belts in South East Wales, we object to the proposed designation of a Green Belt in North Wales – this not being based on any evidence based assessment also.

### ***Policy 22: North West Wales and Energy***

We support this policy, but propose that it is amended to provide explicit support for renewable and low carbon energy development within the region.

We note that Policy 22 refers to determining nuclear energy generating stations in this region, however, applications for nuclear energy generating stations (which are likely to exceed 350MW) are not devolved and consequently, we suggest that the wording within Policy 22 needs to be reviewed carefully.

Policy 22 also states that “*the planning system has a key role in supporting renewable energy and ensuring the North plays its part in decarbonising society, and that the region has a strong potential for generating wind, solar and tidal energy*”. It also refers to the positive impacts the nuclear sector can present in terms of investment, skills and training. Immediately following this statement, Policy 22 highlights that the ‘Anglesey Energy Island Programme’ seeks to co-ordinate action around new energy developments. We are of the view that the policy appears to be overly focussed on nuclear, without making reference to other energy developments and the benefits they can deliver. This policy needs to be reworded to emphasise the economic benefits of other energy developments, for example, large scale pumped hydro energy storage and generation. In this context, we propose the following changes to Policy 22 (suggested new text is underlined; suggested deletions are struck through).

### ***Suggested amendments to Policy 22: North West Wales and Energy***

*The Welsh Government supports North West Wales as a location for all types of new energy development and investment.*

*New energy-related development should support local and regional communities; provide jobs and investment in training and skills; and work with universities and businesses across the region and North West England to co-ordinate and maximise new investment to support the wider region.*

*In determining any applications for ~~nuclear~~ energy generating stations in this region, including nuclear, consideration should be given to ~~the need for further non-renewable energy generation~~, their contribution towards Wales' energy mix, their ability to facilitate the deployment of renewables, their impacts on the natural and historic environment and the economic benefits they would bring to the region.*

We also propose a change to the supporting text to Policy 22:

*The Welsh Government supports the North West Nuclear Arc initiative which is a shared vision (with the UK Government, Universities and the National Nuclear Laboratory) of realising the potential impacts the nuclear can bring into an area in terms of investment, skills and training. The Anglesey 'Energy Island' Programme researches into low carbon energy development, production and servicing and the potential economic rewards that would come forward with such developments. Outside of the nuclear sector, the Welsh Government supports all types of energy storage and generation, for example, large scale pumped hydro, and the economic benefits they bring.*

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policies and approach for the North Region?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	No opinion
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### **10. Mid and South West Wales (policies 23-26)**

Swansea Bay and Llanelli is the main urban area within the region and is our preferred location for growth. We also identify a number of rural and market towns, and the four Haven Towns in Pembrokeshire, as being regionally important. The haven Waterway is nationally important and its development is supported. We support proposals for a Swansea Bay Metro.

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policies and approach for the Mid and South West Region?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 11. South East Wales (policies 27-33)

In South East Wales we are proposing to enhance Cardiff's role as the capital and secure more sustainable growth in Newport and the Valleys. A green belt around Newport and eastern parts of the region will support the spatial strategy and focus development on existing cities and towns. Transport Orientated Development, using locations benefitting from mainline railway and Metro stations, will shape the approach to development across the region. There is support for the growth and development of Cardiff Airport.

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed policies and approach for the South East Region?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have any comments about the NDF's approach or policies to the three regions, please tell us. If you have any alternatives, please explain them and tell us why you think they would be better.

### *Policy 28 – Newport*

The Draft NDF identifies "*Newport as the focus for regional growth and investment.*" However, there is no robust evidence in the form of an urban capacity study to demonstrate that Newport is capable of accommodating any growth beyond that of its own needs. As previously set out, given the role of the NDF in informing the SDP and LDP, it is, as set out in Cardiff Council's response to this consultation "*imperative that it is underpinned by the same rigorous and detailed evidence base expected at local and regional levels*".

In focusing growth on Newport, the NDF makes no reference to the traffic congestion issues that exist along the M4 at Newport and how it proposes this issue should be addressed in any SDP for the region.

### *Policy 30 – Green Belts in South East Wales*

The Draft NDF is prescriptive in stating that it “requires” the identification of green belts through a Strategic Development Plan to manage urban form and growth in South East Wales. with the amplification text going on to state that *“The Strategic Development Plan must identify a green belt that includes the area to the north of the M4 from the Severn Crossings to North Cardiff”* (emphasis added). No sound evidence is provided to justify the imposition of a Green Belt, nor the prescriptive supporting text which identifies its proposed location.

Paragraph 3.60 of PPW identifies where a green belt may be justified stating:

*“Proposals for both Green Belts and green wedges must be soundly based and should only be employed where there is a demonstrable need to protect the urban form and alternative policy mechanisms, such as settlement boundaries, would not be sufficiently robust. The essential difference between them is that land within a Green Belt should be protected for a longer period than the relevant current development plan period, whereas green wedge policies should be reviewed as part of the development plan review process.”*

No evidence is provided by Welsh Government in terms of the ‘demonstrable need’ for the Green Belt. Moreover, standard development management policy mechanisms, such as settlement boundaries, are sufficiently robust to protect the urban form.

The requirement for a Green Belt in the eastern part of the region (predominantly Monmouthshire) would unduly restrict the potential for sustainable growth in this part of Wales to help redress the socio-economic issues that Monmouthshire faces. Moreover, this part of the region needs to respond to the effects of the removal of the Severn Bridge tolls. Monmouthshire’s latest LHMA (July 2018) states the following in respect of potential impacts of in-migration on unaffordability:

*“Bristol property prices have risen by 37%, which means that favourable prices in southeast Wales are proving attractive to house buyers. Information from an estate agent in Chepstow shows that 80% of people buying homes in Monmouthshire are coming from the Bristol area. With the electrification of the South Wales mainline, the planned South Wales metro, the proposed M4 relief road around Newport and the abolition of the Severn crossing tolls we can expect to see continued pressure on house prices in Monmouthshire.”*

Alongside issues of affordability, the unintended consequences of the Green Belt designation would be that Monmouthshire (and Wales) misses out on the economic opportunities associated with the removal of the tolls and the opportunity to capitalise on economic links between the Great Western Cities of Cardiff, Newport and Bristol. As set out earlier in these representations, no testing of alternative scenarios (such as there being no green belt designation) has been undertaken with regard to economic / employment implications. This has a bearing as to whether

the Draft NDF meets the SEA Requirements that it is subject to.

Notwithstanding the above, there is a clear inconsistency in the policy approach to Green Belts between South East Wales (where a green belt is 'required') and North Wales (where a green belt is 'supported' by Welsh Government'). No justification is provided for the different approach. Given that there is inadequate evidence for the Green Belt in South East Wales, it is suggested that the potential for a Green Belt be explored through the SDP and should not therefore be prescribed in the NDF.

PPW states at Paragraph 3.66 that:

*"The boundaries of Green Belts should be altered only in exceptional circumstances and with regard to their intended long-term permanence."*

Given that the SDP plan period is proposed to be 25 years commencing in 2025, and in light of the permanence of the Green Belt, it would likely be required to be in place until 2075 as a minimum (equivalent to two SDP plan periods). The permanence of the Green Belt requires that its designation is based on robust and sound evidence (which is currently lacking). Should its designation be required, it will be key that its location has regard to longer term need for development land (as set out in Para 3.68 of PPW). Given that the overall housing requirement for the NDF period is yet to have been identified, and given that there has been no consideration of urban capacity testing within settlements, it would be wholly inappropriate to require a Green Belt through the SDP.

#### *Policy 31 – Growth in sustainable transit orientated settlements*

Whilst there is in-principle support for development and growth focussed around existing and committed railway and Metro stations, constraints associated with developing such land need to be considered. Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004) states at Paragraph 2.2:

*"Historically, the topography of Wales has generally resulted in transport infrastructure and development being concentrated on valley floors, lowland areas and in the coastal fringes."*

In physical terms, much of the land surrounding stations is therefore constrained by topography and/or flood risk. Every station in South East Wales includes some flood risk area within a 10-minute walking distance of it. Additionally, there are issues of multiple land ownerships which would limit the ability for significant development to come forward in such areas. Accordingly, the potential for transit-oriented development should not be overstated – not least given the uncertainty of phasing / delivery of later phases of Metro infrastructure.

## 12. Integrated Sustainability Appraisal

As part of the consultation process, an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) was conducted to assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of a plan. The report identified a number of monitoring indicators, including health, equalities, Welsh language, the impact on rural communities, children's rights, climate change and economic development.

- Do you have any comments on the findings of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Report? Please outline any further alternative monitoring indicators you consider would strengthen the ISA.

As set out earlier in these representations, no testing of alternative scenarios (such as there being no green belt designation) has been undertaken with regard to economic / employment implications. This has a bearing as to whether the Draft NDF meets the SEA Requirements that it is subject to.

## 13. Habitats Regulations Assessment

As part of the development of the NDF, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was undertaken. The purpose of the HRA process is to identify, assess and address any 'significant effects' of the plan on sites such as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas for birds.

- Do you have any comments on the Habitats Regulations Assessment report?

N/A

## 14. Welsh Language

We would like to know your views on the effects that the NDF would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

N/A

Please also explain how you believe the proposed NDF could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- I. positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and
- II. no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

N/A

## 15. Further comments

- Are there any further comments that you would like to make on the NDF, or any alternative proposals you feel we should consider?

We welcome the Welsh Government's introduction of an NDF to provide a co-ordinated approach to plan making and infrastructure delivery. However, the policies presented in the draft would serve to worsen the delivery of much-needed housing, stifle the ability to harness the opportunities presented by the various City and Growth Deals and have serious negative implications for plan-making<sup>9</sup>. Whilst on Page 10 it is stated that:

*"The NDF will complement the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan and Regional Economic Development Plans by enabling development that maximises the impacts of our investment."*

The NDF, as written, actually seeks to constrain growth in Wales and will in actual fact stifle sustainable development in Wales. Whilst the Welsh Government's aspiration to regenerate the Valley's is commendable, stifling development in viable areas of Wales will result in development not happening rather than development being displaced to the Valleys.

Whilst we are fully supportive of the preparation of an NDF, it is fundamentally flawed in that it is overly prescriptive without being based on a sufficient evidence base. It moreover lacks balance, would unduly constrain the ability of subsequent SDPs and LDPs to deliver the aspirations of the economic ambitions of the growth deals. The result of which is that housing delivery would continue to falter and the

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<sup>9</sup> As set out in the Delivery of housing through the planning system consultation document (Welsh Government, October 2019), *"The planning system, through the Local Development Plan (LDP) process, must provide the land needed to allow for building the new homes which local planning authorities have identified as being required."*

shortage of genuinely available deliverable sites would significantly worsen impacting upon meeting Wales' housing needs (both market and affordable).

The NDF does not provide a clear framework and presents a significant risk to achieving the Government's national strategy set out in Prosperity for All. No sound evidence is provided to justify the imposition of a Green Belt, nor the prescriptive supporting text which identifies its proposed location. Moreover, the Draft NDF does not identify a clear purpose/reasoning for requiring a new Green Belt 'in principle', and so this would present significant challenge for lower tier plans to determine any boundary.

The NDF should make clear that any preference for brownfield/regeneration is exactly that (in line with the search sequence outlined within Paragraph 3.39 of PPW) and that a range and choice of sites (including greenfield development) is required as part of the overall housing mix.

We recognise that some considerable time has passed since the NDF's preparation process started, the deadline for getting the NDF in place is approaching and there is a political imperative to get the NDF in place. It seems to us in these circumstances that there is a strategic decision to be made in respect of the NDF – either:

1. The NDF removes all prescriptive policy requirements, only includes broad and indicative elements for consideration through subsequent plan-making and is explicit that nothing which is stated within the NDF or its evidence base (or lack thereof) should pre-determine the outcome of SDPs and LDPs. In which case, there would be less of a requirement to scrutinise that detail. The NDF would need to avoid any perception that it is pre-judging the content of SDPs and LDPs in those circumstances and that it will be for the lower tier plans to consider many potential options. If as we understand, the Welsh Government do not intend to have the NDF independently examined and fully scrutinised against the tests of soundness at this stage, they and the NDF will need to make it clear that it illustrates only one option that will be considered when preparing lower tier plans; or

2. The NDF continues to include prescriptive policy requirements (albeit with greater balance and not unduly restricting otherwise sustainable development) – although this could only be progressed should there be a complete and proportionate evidence base which is robustly scrutinised through proper independent examination having regard to tests of soundness.

## 16. Are you...?

Providing your own personal response

☒ X

Submitting a response on behalf of an organisation

☐

**Responses to the consultation will be shared with the National Assembly for Wales and are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here**

☐