



Mr Rob Thomas,  
Vale of Glamorgan Council,  
Dock Office,  
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Barry. CF63 4RT

Eich cyf • Your ref  
Ein cyf • Our ref A-PP030-01-022  
27/02/2008

Dear Colleague

**VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2006-2021):  
PREFERRED STRATEGY REGULATION 15 CONSULTATION  
WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

Thank you for consulting the Welsh Assembly Government regarding the Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan pre-deposit documents. We are pleased to see progress being made in furthering a development plan for the area.

It is for the statutory consultation bodies and their equivalents to contribute to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment exercises and your expert group to help you assess if they are fit for purpose.

As always, we would urge you to seek your own legal advice to ensure that you have met all the procedural requirements, including screening for SEA, because responsibility for these matters rests with your Council.

In respect of the other pre-deposit documents we would refer firstly to the new approach to examining LDPs and the way we address this stage of pre-deposit documents involving the preferred strategy, options and other background material from a policy perspective. Please note that there will be a need to obtain and consider advice and representations from other relevant Assembly Government Divisions regarding candidate site proposals or aspects of detailed site assessment.

In the past our comments at UDP pre-deposit draft stage would have been in the form of specific objections to policy omission, relevance or wording which, if not addressed at



deposit or pre-inquiry changes, would be considered by the Inspector in arriving at the recommendations in the Inspector's Report.

Under the new system, the responsibility rests with the local planning authority to ensure that a submitted LDP is sound in procedural terms and enshrines the principles of early community engagement, transparency, consistency, coherence and compatibility to neighbouring authorities. If these principles have not been addressed adequately at the earliest stages of preparation, then the deposit LDP may be considered unsound and unfit for examination.

Without prejudice to the Minister's discretion to intervene later in the process and to the independent examination, the Assembly Government is committed to helping local planning authorities minimise the risk of submitting unsound documents by making appropriate comments at the earliest stages of document preparation, and particularly at the Regulation 15 pre-deposit consultation stage.

To do this, the Assembly Government looks for clear evidence that the ten tests of soundness (as set out in 'LDP Wales' and the 'LDP Manual', and explained further in guidance issued by the Planning Inspectorate) are being addressed.

Having considered all the submitted documents provided by the Vale of Glamorgan Council under Regulation 15, we acknowledge the amount of work undertaken by the authority to reach this stage. We also appreciate that the LDP system is new and that authorities are having to learn as they progress.

To ensure your authority secures a sound plan in due course, we have provided a strategic assessment of the Preferred Strategy document (as supported by the other documentation you have provided). We have indicated where evidence of soundness is not immediately clear. The annex to this letter sets out the detailed comments of the Assembly Government on the Preferred Strategy document; some comments relate to more than one test of soundness and we have provided cross-references where most appropriate.

There still remain some substantive matters as outlined below, which need to be addressed well before you produce a deposit plan. We suggest that to support your on-going self-assessment regarding soundness, you improve or provide:

- **Explicit explanation of how** the evidence base, the key land-use issues, (e.g. mineral supply and safeguarding, flood risk, affordable housing and housing supply etc) the analysis of the wider context and particularly how the plan objectives have been used to assess the options and to arrive at the preferred strategy.
- The LDP would be more informed if the **vision** was spatially distinct and related to the area's unique local characteristics and key issues.
- **How key national policy** issues (such as affordable housing, flooding, climate change, infrastructure availability, resource safeguarding, environmental/landscape issues, waste, etc), have influenced development of the Preferred Strategy at a strategic level.
- Give consideration to the impacts of **climate change** and the adaptation responses with regard to; floodplain/coastal risks/water management, biodiversity, green/open spaces and the historic environment to the spatial distribution and design of new developments.
- Provide evidence of liaison with **neighbouring authorities** (in addition to the Housing Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement apportionment work) demonstrating how the Vale of Glamorgan's strategic land use aspirations integrate with those of other neighbouring local authorities.
- Provide a clear link between **housing and employment land** requirements for the area, particularly strategic employment locations.
- How the strategy will address uncertainty and yet achieve the identified objectives. The deposit plan will need to be **flexible** enough to respond to circumstances such as

emerging regional work (WSP, RTP, etc.) and evolving national/regional population/housing numbers and to include **contingency** approaches if the private sector are unable to deliver or the planned infrastructure required cannot be funded.

- The Assembly Government's national and sub-national household projections for Wales form a starting point for assessing housing requirements. Other evidence including local housing market assessments should be considered. Robustness will be increased where there is a transparent analysis of all the appropriate evidence, with a clear rationale demonstrating the conclusion.
- Consideration of the **spatial implications** e.g. the strategic distribution of growth within the current urban areas as proposed in the preferred strategy. The strategy included in the deposit plan would benefit from being more locationally specific signalling the anticipated role of places across the county identified for change on the key diagram including the broad scale of change outlining the implications for local communities.
- The **focus and detailing of the strategic policies** in order to show how they deliver the preferred strategy, to improve on their distinctiveness, and also to avoid them repeating national planning policy unless developing its application to the local area as recommended in the 'Planning Policy Wales Companion Guide'.

Providing data exists and work has been undertaken where apparent gaps in the evidence base have been identified, we believe that much of this advice can be accommodated by refining and including emerging background material, for the deposit plan and its supporting documentation. This should not delay deposit plan preparation and should improve the prospects of the plan being deemed sound.

You should document your response to our comments in your Consultation Report.

To assist your authority in taking forward the LDP, we recommend that we meet your officers to discuss our response at the earliest opportunity. If you have any queries in relation to the response, please contact Hywel Butts (on 029 2082 1619) or myself.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Newey**

Joint Head of Plans Management and Performance Branch  
Planning Division

***(enclosure – annexe)***