

Welsh Government: National Development Framework 2020 – 2040; Consultation Draft

Report to	County Council
Date of Meeting	15/10/2019
Lead Member	Cllr Mark Young, Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities
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1. What is the report about

This report is about the publication of Welsh Government's 'National Development Framework 2020 – 2040, Consultation Draft: 7th August – 1st November 2019. It briefly introduces the document and outlines potential implications for the Council that may arise from national policy contained in the consultation document.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide Council with information on the content of the Welsh Government (WG) consultation document because it is not only going to have an impact on the production of the next Local Development Plan for the County but also becomes an important source of national policy for decision-making on planning applications and appeals.

Officers have worked across Council departments on the draft consultation response (see Appendix 1).

3. What are the recommendations?

Council agree the response to the draft NDF consultation (as attached in Appendix 1); with any amendments, and the Lead Member for Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities submit the finalised consultation response to Welsh Government on behalf of Denbighshire County Council under delegated powers.

4. Report Details

Once the finalised version is published by Welsh Government (WG) in September 2020, the National Development Framework 2020 – 2040 (NDF) will form the development plan for the whole of Wales, setting out the land use implications of key policy and objectives at national level. It does not only show where nationally significant developments and large-scale renewable energy projects are going to take place but also where Welsh Government expects growth to be facilitated by lower tier plans: Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) at regional level and Local Development Plans (LDPs) at local level. There are currently no SDPs in Wales.

Unlike the Wales Spatial Plan, the NDF forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the County which means that planning applications have to be determined by Planning Committee on policy and site designations contained in the LDP and the NDF. That implies that both plans must be in conformity. Since the NDF is likely to be published before the adoption of the next Denbighshire LDP, the LDP Examination will also focus on compliance with the higher tier plan. Members are therefore encouraged to consider the draft NDF when discussing planning proposals for the emerging LDP.

Welsh Government proposes the demarcation of the Welsh territory into three regions: North Wales, Mid and South West Wales, and South East Wales. Enforcing collective planning at the regional level, it will be mandatory for local planning authorities to produce Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) for their respective region (see draft NDF policy 16). This could be a single or multiple plans. There is currently no information on the availability of resources and finances from WG to produce SPGs. Members may recall the letter (see Appendix 2) from the former Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths, dated 13th December 2017, which invited Denbighshire County Council (DCC) to consider producing a SPG with its neighbouring authorities. The invitation was not taken up in North Wales.

The purpose of SDPs is to focus on larger than local matters; such as housing growth requirements and broad spatial distribution, regionally important employment sites and addressing the need of Gypsy and Travellers. They are currently defined and set by individual local planning authorities. These matters will continue to be addressed in Local Development Plans until a SDP has been adopted for the region. Welsh Government envisages the earliest an SDP would be adopted is 2025; this is likely to be in South East Wales / Greater Cardiff.

The NDF must be read alongside Planning Policy Wales because both documents set out national policy on an all-Wales basis. The consultation document is subdivided into five sections which follows a sequential structure:

- 1) Introduction: Section explains purpose of the NDF and how the spatial strategy fits with wider Welsh Government policy;
- 2) Challenges & Opportunities: Section broadly identifies and explains the main challenges and opportunities facing Wales over the period 2020 – 2040;
- 3) NDF Outcomes: Section sets out how the NDF is addressing the previously identified challenges and opportunities;
- 4) Spatial Strategy: Section sets out major patterns of development and areas of change that are needed nationally to deliver the outcomes; and
- 5) The Regions: Section sets out the ambitions and policies for national growth in the three identified regions of Wales. It highlights key locations for significant developments.

Welsh Government's 'Estimates of housing need in Wales' indicates a need for an additional 114,000 homes across Wales between 2018 and 2038 (see draft NDF, p.30). Specifically for North Wales, it is anticipated that there is a need for 19,400 dwellings for the same period and over the first five years, i.e. 2018/19 to 2022/23, 51% of them should be affordable homes (see draft NDF, p. 51). It should however be noted that the lifetime of the NDF is from 2020 to 2040, which suggests that the figures are subject to change prior to publication of the finalised document. Draft Development Plan Manual Edition 3, paragraphs 5.28 and 5.33, highlight the fact that the housing need requirement must be addressed for the entire plan period.

New large-scale employment and housing growth will primarily be delivered in the following three 'National Growth Areas': (1) Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys; (2) Swansea Bay and Llanelli; and (3) Wrexham and Deeside. Those three areas are supplemented by a network of 'Regional Growth Areas' that were identified for every region. These areas are depicted in the Spatial Strategy of the NDF (see draft NDF pp. 24-25) together with major transport infrastructure, National Parks and AONBs (see Appendix 3).

Acknowledging the diversity of rural areas, the draft NDF concedes in delegating planning for rural areas to lower tier plans (see draft NDP policy 4), i.e. SDPs and LDPs. National policy does however set the framework for the protection of National Parks and Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and accepts a degree of landscape change from renewable energy development in specifically-designated rural areas.

The NDF introduces 'Wales Energy Priority Areas' for large scale energy development in support of WG objective to increase the generation of renewable energy. These new areas for on-shore wind generation and solar energy over 10 mega watts are going to replace the Technical Advice Note 8 'Planning for Renewable Energy' Strategic Search Areas. Supporting information on the draft NDF indicates that three 'Priority Areas' are in or adjacent to the County boundary (see Appendix 4): (1) 'Clocaenog Forest' but with extension to the south; (2) south of Abergele; and (3) north west of Wrexham. Members should note that the site boundaries are part of the current consultation. Local communities are encouraged to make representations on this subject as part of the current consultation.

Brief summary of proposals for the North Wales region (but not an exhaustive list):

- Primary growth area: Wrexham and Deeside;
- Secondary growth area: built up coastal arc from Caernarfon to Prestatyn;
- There is a need to deliver up to 19,400 homes until 2038, 51% needs to be affordable over the initial 5 years (2018 – 2023);
- Production of Strategic Development Plan that facilitates the delivery of the North Wales Growth Deal and supports key economic sectors;
- Introduction of the 'North Wales Metro' with improved links to North West England; and
- Support for Anglesey Energy Island and Trawsfynydd project.

The draft NDF has been discussed at Strategic Planning Group, Cabinet Briefing and Planning Committee and comments made have been incorporated into the Council's draft consultation response. It was agreed at Cabinet Briefing that a report should be presented to Council for further discussion on the 15th October 2019. Any additional comments made at this meeting will inform the finalised response. It is intended that the final response will be signed off via a Lead Member Delegated Decision prior to submission to Welsh Government by 1st November 2019.

Further information on the draft NDF can be found on the Welsh Government website: <https://gov.wales/draft-national-development-framework>

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Once the NDF has been published by Welsh Government, it will not only be part of the adopted Development Plan for the County but also inform the production of the next Local Development Plan by setting additional national policy and outlining the spatial framework for locating large-scale development.

Submitting the Council's consultation response has no immediate effect on the Corporate Priorities but the NDF will set out where Welsh Government will focus future growth and investments in Wales. This is likely to inform the formulation and delivery of future Corporate Priorities and Council Strategies, for example the Economic and Community Ambition Strategy and the Local Development Plan.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Providing input to inform the finalised consultation response on behalf of the Council will not incur any cost.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well Being Impact

Assessment?

A Well-being Impact Assessment is not required because no decision is sought on Council policy, strategy, work procedure or programme. Members are only being asked to note the content.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The draft NDF has been discussed at the Strategic Planning Group meeting (2/09/2019), Cabinet Briefing (9/09/2019) and Planning Committee (9/10/2019). Members were concerned about the lack of information and aspiration for rural areas, and the loss of influence on local decision-making due to the introduction of Strategic Development Plans.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

It is not anticipated that any costs will be incurred in submitting the finalised consultation response to Welsh Government on behalf of Denbighshire County Council. However if any arise they will need to be contained within existing revenue budgets.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

If the Council was not to engage in the Welsh Government consultation it would miss the opportunity to voice support / objection to national policy that will have an effect on the production of the next LDP, decision-making at Planning Committee, and future Council priorities.

11. Power to make the Decision

Appendix 2(b) to Section 13 of the Council's Constitution