

# **South East Wales Strategic Planning Group**

## **Officer Meeting**

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

**10:30 am**

**Monmouthshire County Council  
County Hall, Cwmbran**

### **Present**

George Ashworth	GA	MCC Head of Planning Service (Chairperson)
Jane Coppock	JC	Monmouthshire County Council
Martin Davies	MD	Monmouthshire County Council
Jill Edge	JE	Monmouthshire County Council
Lesley Punter	LP	Welsh Assembly Government
David James	DJ	South East Wales Regional Housing Forum (Co-ordinator)
Peter Green	PG	Bridgend County Borough Council
David Llewellyn	DAL	Bridgend County Borough Council
Nick Lloyd	NL	Bridgend County Borough Council
Brian Swain	BS	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Roger Tanner	RT	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Dave Holtam	DH	Cardiff County Council
Gerry Lynch	GL	Cardiff County Council
Sally Davies	SD	Newport City Council
Graham Fry	GF	Newport City Council
Wyn Mitchell	WM	Newport City Council
Nicola Gulley	NG	Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
Robert Murray	RM	Torfaen County Borough Council
Adrian Wilcock	AWi	Torfaen County Borough Council
Andrew Wallace	AWa	Vale of Glamorgan Council

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

GA welcomed all to the meeting and introduced PG, SD and DJ, attending on behalf of SEWRHF.

### **2. Apologies**

Rhian Kyte	RK	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Lynda Healy	LH	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Jerry Dixon	JD	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Rachel Willis	RW	Brecon Beacons National Park

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meetings for Information**

Member/Officer Meeting 22 May 2006

The minutes were noted and confirmed as an accurate record.

#### **4. South East Wales Regional Housing Forum Presentation**

Presentation by PG: copy circulated at the meeting and enclosed with minutes as *Document 1*.

PG described the development of SEWHF, including the completed Phase 1 project, which identified broad housing markets across the SE Wales region. The output of this study was a general report for the region as a whole, with individual locality reports for each local authority area. Consultants from Cambridge University have been commissioned to carry out Phase 2 of the project. The aim of the project is to produce an interactive regional housing market model for SE Wales. There is a statutory requirement on local authorities to prepare housing strategies that are based on local housing market assessments. Such assessments are static, representing the position at a particular point in time. It is intended that the Regional Housing Market Model will be dynamic, able to respond rapidly to changing conditions using sophisticated data sets to measure housing need and demand across the region.

PG, SD and DJ then took questions from the Group.

GA briefly outlined the work of SEWSPG in apportioning projected housing growth across the region and queried SEWRHF's vision for the final outcome of the housing project, particularly with regard to how it might relate to the planning work that was being undertaken. SD pointed out that Phase 2 would primarily be a software tool utilising data from across LA boundaries. The model would provide housing needs information on a much more dynamic basis than the traditional housing needs survey.

In the discussion that followed concern was expressed that constantly changing demand figures would present problems for the development plan process, which worked on much longer timescales. SD recognised this but pointed out that the time period for establishing housing needs was lengthening in that funding bids had to be made 3 years in advance and that, in any event, the aim of the model would be to inform about changes that were needed, providing an early indication of such changes. LP also pointed out that it was not the responsibility of the planning system to meet all of the needs.

It was queried whether the model would indicate the total need for housing, not just affordable housing. SD replied that this had been asked for but that it was not certain that it could be provided. RT expressed concern that if the model produced a different set of figures to those used in planning that this could undermine the planning process, particularly at an inquiry if the housing needs figures were much higher. DH pointed out that there was a huge difference between the figures used in planning and those arising from housing needs surveys. The regional aim was to spread growth but if, for instance, all Cardiff's housing needs were met within the city then this spread would not happen. GA agreed that there was a need to try and bridge the gap between planning and the vast figures arising from housing needs. LP noted that if housing needs surveys suggested that all the new housing projected should be affordable then this would be an argument to ensure that developers at least provided a percentage of affordable housing on their sites. The issue of allocating sites solely for affordable housing was raised and SD confirmed that this has been done in Newport.

SD also confirmed that there was a two year Social Housing Grant Programme in place for 2006-07 and 07/08. Over the next two months a plan for 2008/09 would be confirmed. This was agreed by all to assist in forward planning.

[The status of the Affordable Housing Toolkit was queried. PG and SD explained that this was a model for negotiating with developers in order to be able to assess the viability of affordable housing provision by putting development costs through a model and balancing abnormal costs with developers' expectations of profit. Work so far had suggested that around 20% provision was viable and developers had been accepting this. It was confirmed that the House Builders Federation had been involved in development of the Toolkit and was also part funding it.]

The meeting was concerned to ensure that a consistent approach was adopted between the planning and housing groups. DJ stressed that projections changed all the time depending on the models and data sets used and that he was happy to liaise with SEWSPG to try and accommodate its concerns. GF outlined that a more responsive approach was needed due to the long term nature of plans with plans able to accommodate a certain degree of flexibility, but without having to review the whole plan process. AW confirmed that he had been invited to attend SEWHF meetings.

**Action: GF to accompany AW to meetings of the Regional Housing Model Group to represent SEWSPG and report back to SEWSPG members at future meetings.**

## **5. Apportionment of Regional Household Projections – Statistical Update**

DH spoke to his paper updating progress on the apportionment of household projections. Changes had been made to the table for statistical purposes and also following discussions with a number of LAs. Sub-regional groupings were included for comparison purposes. It was pointed out that achieving the apportionment is dependent on increased house building, especially in Newport, RCT and Caerphilly and to a lesser extent (in terms of the region) in Merthyr, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. There is a need to consider the next steps to be taken, particularly in relation to proposed consultations.

### Apportionment.

GA asked the meeting if everyone was content with the apportionment.

AWi advised that Torfaen wished to increase its figure to 6,410. This was following discussion with members but it was also the view of officers that this could be achieved, particularly as house builders were giving increased attention to the valley areas. RT stated that the 750 per year projected for Caerphilly was nearing acceptable limits and that the preference would be for 650 per year.

Concern was expressed that the final column of the table, which indicated increased or reduced 'share' of household growth, was misleading. For instance, Blaenau Gwent was showing a reduced share of household growth while at the same time the projection required a considerable increase in the rate of dwelling completions in the county.

**Action: DH agreed to revise the figures and presentation of the final table column accordingly. Document 2**

### Option Generation.

RT pointed out that Caerphilly would be considering its strategic options in the Autumn as part of the LDP process. Brownfield land was mainly available in the south but stimulating regeneration in the north might involve the release of greenfield sites. LP pointed out that this debate cut across the options in the WSP project, which should be thought through in terms of the apportionment. The three options were likely to be:

- (i) 'business as usual', continuing current trends;
- (ii) concentration on two road corridors, the M4 and Heads of the Valleys; and
- (iii) more dispersed, balanced growth.

It was recognised that a number of LA areas cut across these three spatial options, in a similar way as housing market areas run from east to west. GA stated that he considered that the figures being developed by the Group could be put forward as an option to feed into the LDP process. They would also provide an option for the WSP project and would carry greater weight if the whole of the group was in agreement.

### Next steps.

There was general discussion on the status of the work being carried out by the Group and its relationship to the WSP process. DL pointed out that there was a need to firm up the apportionment in order to provide population estimates for LDPs, with education and other service providers needing to know this information for forward planning. He was concerned that the figures could be subject to continual revision through the LDP process, particularly when put under political scrutiny. GA stated that SEWSPG provided a forum to check changes as they arise, either through detailed work in LDPs or through liaison with the WSP. DL agreed that there was a need to meet on a regular basis to refine figures and not to drift apart into independent working.

**Action: GA and LP to establish where the work on housing apportionment being carried out by SEWSPG is positioned in relation to progress on the WSP Strategic Development Framework.**

### Consultations.

In his paper DH gave consideration to the requirements in respect of further consultations. His view was that widespread consultation would be premature at this stage without reference to the wider strategic framework likely to be provided by the WSP in relation to such matters as major employment, transport and infrastructure proposals. He did not feel that it would be appropriate, for instance, to consult with the house builders or groups such as Sewta without reference to this broader context and considered that the consultation would be best done under the auspices of the WSP, particularly if it was to be done on a formal basis.

NG was concerned about the timescale and considered that there was a need to carry out the consultation process as soon as possible giving the stage at which RCT was in its LDP process. GA confirmed previous agreement of the Member/Officer May meeting that the apportionment figures be used as a working hypothesis to feed into the LDP process at this time.

There was concern about the implications of the proposed growth in households for infrastructure providers. GA suggested that each LA attempt to establish the views of

the statutory undertakers with regard to the proposed growth rates in its area. The view of the meeting, however, was that this consultation would be best done by the Group on a regional basis. LP agreed that such matters were a regional, or even a national, issue. It was not clear, however, whether such consultation should be done by SEWSPG or by the WSP project team. LP and GA would seek clarification on this.

**Action: SEWSPG to seek a collective meeting with the main infrastructure providers, subject to establishing the WSP Core Group's position on this matter.**

DH also pointed out that in order to have meaningful discussions with the infrastructure bodies and groups such as Sewta it would be necessary to have some broad indication of where the house building is likely to take place. He asked, therefore, that LAs get back to him with a statement on where they envisage the housing is going to be located (on the lines of, say, 40% south/60% north) to enable this to be mapped.

**Action: Representatives of all LPAs to provide a broad indication of the likely location of future house building in their area. This information to be provide to DH by Friday 23 June.**

*(To note: DH has subsequently circulated an e-mail confirming this requirement and also including a table for completion on the likely brownfield/greenfield split of the projected housing figures). Copy attached with these minutes – Document 2.*

#### Sewta.

It was agreed that a formal consultation with Sewta would be premature at this stage, particularly as Sewta was currently in discussions with the WSP Unit over the nature of its contribution to the SE Wales Area Project. A representative of Sewta, however, has already agreed to make a presentation to SEWSPG on the nature of its work.

**Action: A representative of Sewta to be invited to give a presentation to the next SEWSPG meeting (July).**

#### Publicity.

As a result of publicity given to work of the Group through an article in last week's 'Planning' enquires were beginning to come in from agents and house builders. While it was too early for any formal publicity or consultation to be carried out, GA reminded the Group that the minutes of the latest meeting were posted on MCC's website and could be inspected by anyone interested. It was agreed that the work of the Group would be an open process and that there was no justification for papers relating to the ongoing discussions taking place being kept confidential. JC confirmed that the other regional groups (Sewta, SEWEF and SEWRHF) receive copies of all SEWSPG meeting agenda/minutes and other papers.

## **6. Form and Function of Settlements**

At the last meeting it was agreed that each LA would prepare a short description of the functional role of each of their main settlements to be forwarded to the SEWSPG Secretariat, who would coordinate a response to the WSP Core Group. This information had been collated and a draft report circulated with the agenda.

RT thanked all for the information provided. 45 centres had been identified but this was based on Cardiff City Council only having one identified centre and did not include any return from Newport. *(To note: Newport CC has subsequently provided its information, having identified 5 centres. A complete version of the Form and Function of Settlements document will be circulated with these minutes as Document 3).*

RT pointed out that the value of this information would depend on the purpose for which it was intended. He identified three main reasons:

- (i) better inform the WSP process by providing a rational basis for identifying key centres;
- (ii) provide revised reference points for a groups such as Sewta in its consideration of transport issues; and
- (iii) inform LDPs.

GA confirmed that these aims conformed with the WSP Core Group's discussions. It was not clear to the meeting what the role of consultants was in this process, noting the earlier intention of the WSP group to engage consultants to carry out a Key Settlements Baseline Study, but that this had not been undertaken to date.

RT noted a lack of consistency in the data provided. Cardiff, for instance, only listed one centre while Bridgend listed all its settlements. A number of out-of-town centres were also excluded from the hierarchy, such as Nantgarw and Culverhouse Cross. The terminology used for hospitals was not consistent. Similarly there was no clarity over sizes of leisure centres and the facilities that they provide. Employment and tourism were also areas that proved difficult to measure consistently. Different methods of evaluation were possible: award points for level of service provided and give a general ranking for each settlement, rank separately by topic or a combination of both. A final methodology would be dependent on the proposed outcome of the study and further clarification was needed from the WSP Core Group.

LP outlined the importance of avoiding traditional economic competition between centres and the need to find complementary roles. Additional 'visionary' information provided by LAs on future settlement roles would be particularly helpful in this respect.

**Action: RT to provide a summary paper with some questions for the WSP Core Group regarding how it sees the study being taken forward. This paper to be presented to the Core Group at its next meeting by GA and LP.**

*(To note: RT has subsequently completed this paper - copy attached to these minutes with relevant follow up e-mail - Document 3).*

## **7. Development Plan Progression – Update**

Updates to the information given in the last meeting:

Blaenau Gwent	-	Notice of Intention to Adopt issued last week. Adoption on 6 July 2006.
Monmouthshire	-	Notice of Adoption on 22 June 2006.
Torfaen	-	Preferred options consultation to be changed to March/April 2006.
Vale of Glamorgan	-	Claimant was given legal aid to go to Court of Appeal.

## 8. AOB

(1) LP advised that every LA in adopting its UDP should provide a statement outlining the rationale for not undertaking an Appropriate Assessment. Advice could be obtained from the CCW. There was no requirement to publish, merely to prepare a statement.

(2) RT advised that CACI, a firm of retail consultants, had approached him with a request to give a presentation to the group on a tool that it had developed for analysing retail impacts, providing information on where people go for shopping and other activities such as leisure. The company had already given a presentation to the West Wales Regional Planning Group. It seemed that some LAs had already received presentations from the company and it was queried whether the product was any different from that already presented.

**Action: SEWSPG Secretariat to clarify the nature of the proposed presentation and perhaps invite CACI to a future meeting.**

(3) WM advised that the Environment Agency had written to all local authorities regarding flood defence structures and offered to give a presentation to the next SEWSPG meeting on this matter.

**Action: An item on Environment Agency flood defence structures be placed on the agenda for the next SEWSPG officer meeting.**

## 8. Date of Next Meetings

Special Officer Meeting	-Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2006 (TBC following WSP Core Group meeting on 22 June)
AGM	- Monday, 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2006

GA closed the meeting at 12:30 pm and thanked all for attending.

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