



The Local Development Plan for Newport

Your Community, Your Plan

Strategic Options

March 2009



NEWPORT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011 - 2026

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Introduction

The Newport Local Development Plan (LDP) is being prepared in accordance with the Delivery Agreement¹ which sets out the timetable and processes to be used.

At the current Strategic Options stage of the process, the Council is seeking to engage with all interested parties in considering main options for the plan. The purpose at this stage is to examine options and set general directions for the plan, consistent with the Vision and Objectives that have been developed through a consultation process at the previous stage². Following the consultation on Strategic Options, a Preferred Strategy will be developed, and more detailed work on specific policies and proposals can be undertaken.

The options need to be at least reasonably realistic, as far as can be assessed at this preliminary stage before full evaluation. Inclusion of any option will not imply council endorsement, but will be part of the process of identifying and assessing alternatives with a view to eventually selecting a preferred option taking relevant information and consultation results into account. The gathering of evidence with regard to options will be an important part of preparing a sound plan.

The Strategic Options are being fed through the Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA\SEA) by independent consultants working for the council. The SA\SEA process is an important part of the plan preparation process³.

¹ The Delivery Agreement is available at:

www.newport.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/leaflets_and_brochures/cont218059.pdf

² The Vision and Objectives are available at:

www.newport.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/report/cont345519.pdf

³ The Scoping Report is available at:

www.newport.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/plans_and_strategies/cont324129.pdf

Procedures and Timetable

The Options

These are grouped by topic area as follows:

Housing:

Growth Assumptions (numbers and delivery)

Accommodation for Students and Young People

Accommodation for the Elderly

Village Development

Employment

Celtic Manor

Airport

Note that while many options within a group may be mutually exclusive, this may not always be the case.

Certain options will fit better with some in another group than others.

Housing

Housing numbers are always a key issue for development plans. There are options as to how much growth should be accommodated in Newport, but these all need to be seen against the background of a large amount of land already committed for housing. Currently, there is sufficient land available to accommodate about 11,750 dwellings at currently proposed densities. While some of these sites will be built by 2011, and will not therefore feature in the land supply in the LDP period, many will not have been built on by 2011 in the current depressed state of the housing market. New sites are likely to gain planning permission in the intervening period under the policies of the currently adopted plan, however, thereby replenishing the supply. So a potential build rate of about 750-800 dwellings per year could be feasible on currently available sites, if densities remained the same overall.

While the current recession has resulted in a pronounced reduction in private sector house building, housing associations are continuing to build and the plan needs to take the long view, and be robust for all market conditions. Basic housing need is not affected by the recession, the people and households or potential households are largely the same, it is just the ability to afford different types of accommodation and tenures that is subject to change.

Housing options are therefore likely to cover many other aspects than numbers alone.

Growth Assumptions

The Issues

Issues may be seen under two headings:

- a) how much new housing should Newport accommodate in order to meet:
its own needs,
to sustain the development of the Newport economy, and
to meet wider responsibilities in the region?
- b) how and where should those dwellings be delivered, and of what types?

The assessment of the needs of the future population of Newport will require careful consideration and long term forecasting, which will need to be kept under review. Currently existing needs should also be taken into account. The most recent Housing Market Assessment suggests that an annual build rate of 670 dwellings per year would be a reasonable requirement for the next 5 years.

The current economic recession is resulting in a marked slow-down in private sector building, although building by registered social landlords (RSLs) has not been affected. Some elements of affordable housing on private sector sites have also been proceeding more rapidly than the market housing because there is a guaranteed payment from the RSL on completion.

The provision of affordable housing will remain an issue whatever the growth option chosen, with it being a priority of the Welsh Assembly Government. See for example, Planning Policy Wales, March 2002⁴, which states that “a community’s need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration” and One Wales, June 2007⁵.

The Options

a) Housing Numbers

HN1 SEWSPG Apportionment

The currently agreed figure in the South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) Memorandum of Understanding of March 2007 is **800 dwellings** per year. This would represent a continuation of the Growth Strategy incorporated in the adopted UDP. (The UDP requirement for the period 2006-11 is 740pa). The SEWSPG figure, agreed by Newport City Council, has status as an option to be considered alongside any other viable options. It only covers the period to 2021, but if it is extrapolated to 2026, this would produce a population of 164,500, a 17% increase on 2006.

HN2 Population Trend Growth

A projection of population and household growth based on recent trends, notably of inward migration, produces an annual requirement of about **600 dwellings** and a population of 156,800 in 2026, an increase of 12% on 2006.

HN3 House Building Trend Growth

Since the mid 1990s, house building rates averaged over a 5 year period have varied from 380 to 520. A continuation of this trend would be for an average rate of **450 dwellings** per year. This would produce a population of 149,000 in 2026, an increase of 6% on 2006. However, this would imply a small net outward migration from Newport as there would be insufficient houses for all local people.

⁴ Available at: www.wales.gov.uk/desh/publications/planning/ppw/ppw2002e.pdf?lang=en

⁵ Available at: www.wales.gov.uk/strategy/strategies/onewales/onewalese.pdf?lang=en

b) Housing Delivery

To some extent, consideration of the delivery of new housing will be dependent on the level of need that has been identified as appropriate under the Housing Numbers options. There are, however, wider issues that need debate whatever the level of need identified, although the interaction between the issues should not be overlooked.

HD1 Do Nothing

Given the significant amount of land currently committed, this would be a realistic option.

HD2 Market-led

This would allow various peripheral extensions to the city, responding to the market as developers perceived it, which together with existing allocations would result in a potential significant oversupply with the market determining which land was developed. Population change would be dependent on the level of building occurring.

HD3 New Markets

The housing sector has seen considerable changes over the last 15 years, and it would be surprising if there were not further changes over the forthcoming plan period. In some cities, there has been an apparent over-development of small flats and apartments in recent years, with the market becoming saturated and particularly badly affected in the current recession. This was a relatively new market in Newport, however, and there may still be a significant element of need for this type of accommodation. Apartments of more generous proportions would also appear to be under-represented in the current offer, and could be important in both the retention of graduates in the city, and in the freeing up of larger properties, for example from older couples who no longer want that size of property with the attendant maintenance and gardening liabilities.

Other trends that might become apparent could include a greater demand for live-work units as IT facilitates greater home-working and as costs, congestion and climate change concerns discourage commuting.

The following housing issues are not likely to have great significance in terms of overall numbers, but are included as issues likely to have local significance and impact.

Accommodation for Students and Young People

The Issues

Although overall numbers in the 18-30 age group are not expected to increase, the University is developing its presence in the city. Issues include:

- the effects of concentrations of students in certain housing areas (“studentification”);
- the importance to the economy of the retention within the city of recent graduates.

High numbers of students living in shared houses in an area can give rise to certain frictions with the established community, but can also bring benefits to local shops. This is not currently a major issue in Newport, which is partly a reflection of the fact that the university has quite a high proportion of home based students, and provides many part-time courses, attractive to mature students.

Graduates are important to the local economy in providing the skills needed to sustain and develop it. They have potential to earn good salaries so also provide a direct stimulus to local businesses.

The Options

Y1 Do Nothing

Make no special provision either for students or to try and increase the proportion living and working in the city after graduation.

Y2 To Seek the Provision of More Student Accommodation

While the powers of the local planning authority are limited with respect to controlling studentification, a more proactive encouragement of desirable forms of development may limit the growth of less desirable forms.

Y3 To Encourage City Centre Accommodation Attractive to Young People

The provision of modern apartments in an attractive setting is seen as important to the retention of young people in an area, and especially graduates. There is only limited such provision at present, and greater provision could help in the retention of people likely to be in professional and better paid jobs whose presence could boost the Newport economy.

Accommodation for the Elderly

The Issues

There is projected to be a large increase in the number of people of retirement age. Between 2006 and 2026 this could amount to an increase of over 9,000 in this age group, with possible implications for types of housing required. This growth reflects national trends of increasing life expectancy, and that the post-war baby boom will have reached retirement age. This age group does not have a high propensity to migrate, so is not much affected by differing migration assumptions.

The Options

OAP1 Do Nothing

No special allowance for the housing needs of the elderly.

OAP2 Limited Provision

Some recognition could be given to the special requirements of housing developments for the elderly without allowing them on sites that would not otherwise be likely to be permitted.

OAP3 Specific Provision

Specialist accommodation for the elderly can sometimes involve a mix of uses including market housing, sheltered/supported accommodation, residential care home and nursing home, and community facilities such as communal lounge, restaurant, launderette, hairdresser, health centre and fitness suite, often open to the general public. These are sometimes known as Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs). Consideration could be given to allowing such development on sites that might not otherwise secure consent for open market housing, particularly where they would represent a valuable enhancement of local facilities and the integration of planning for housing, health and social care, and community development.

Village Development

The Issues

Development issues in or around villages are likely to centre on aspects of affordability, countryside protection and sustainability. Housing Market Assessments should assist in defining the potential scope of requirements, but these will need to be balanced against conflicting issues of environmental protection and sustainability.

Development in villages is likely to be some distance from most facilities, including employment, schools and shops, with low access to public transport, so the carbon footprint of residents could be large. Social sustainability may, however, offer justification for some development, so issues may centre on the type of development that might be appropriate.

The Options

V1 Do Nothing

Village boundaries are currently drawn quite tightly, and in this option this would remain the case, with little scope for further development.

V2 Sustainable Village Development

While development in villages tends to be inherently unsustainable in view of high car-dependency, there may be some justification, for example, on the basis of sustaining local facilities, services and businesses, providing affordable housing for local families and maintaining viable communities. An option would therefore be to allow limited development on the basis of strengthening the local community, with enhanced provision of affordable housing and higher Eco-homes standards of construction being required to offset car-dependency. Continuing Care Retirement Communities could be seen as appropriate in some villages, especially as they tend to be fairly self-contained, with many facilities on site and no need to be near schools or employment sites, and consequently with lower levels of car usage than younger age groups.

V3 Village Expansion

While there will always be local issues to consider for each village as to the appropriateness, level and location of possible growth, there is a possible Strategic Option of allowing more development in villages generally than has recently been the case. Villages do generally enjoy a good reputation as housing locations, and further development could be seen as increasing the range and choice of new housing available, a factor that could assist in attracting inward investment in new employment. The popularity of villages has, however, tended to price many local people out of the market, so any new development should be on the basis of providing the full 30% affordable housing. As inherently car dependent, Eco Homes Code Level 6 should also be required for all new housing development in villages.

Employment

The Issues

The creation of job opportunities is likely to be an ongoing priority, and issues may revolve around the amount of employment land required, the location of it, and the provision of jobs on land not specifically allocated for employment purposes. The council's Economic Development Strategy is currently being reviewed to cover the period to 2011 to coincide with the end of the adopted Newport Unitary Development Plan period and the start of the Local Development Plan period. An assessment of industrial and commercial land and property is recommended to inform the new plan.

On the location of employment land, a key issue may be the balance between motorway related sites and those with more sustainable transport access.

Because much employment is provided on land not specifically allocated for employment purposes, for example in government offices, schools, shops and hospitals, there are issues about the protection or relocation of such uses.

The Options

E1 Do Nothing

Newport has a considerable amount of land allocated for employment purposes, so an option would be to carry this forward without significant alteration.

E2 Market-led Reappraisal of Supply

This option would allow for additions or deletions to be made to employment allocations largely on the basis of removing sites that have not been developed and may be unlikely to be developed, and adding others in developer favoured locations.

E3 Sustainable and Regeneration Based Employment

This option would seek to maximise employment in sustainable locations, well-related to public transport, including city centre and other brownfield locations.

E4 Employment Promotion on Non-Employment Sites

This would seek to maximise employment opportunities through the encouragement of employment generating uses. Renewed regional hospital facilities would be particularly favoured in view of the range, quality and quantity of jobs.

Celtic Manor

The Issues

The Celtic Manor Resort is now a significant employer in Newport, with an international profile. Development of the facility has been incremental, and issues relate to how any further proposals should be handled.

The Options

CM1 Do Nothing

Under this option any further development proposals would be considered on an individual case by case basis.

CM2 Masterplan Approach

The Celtic Manor site as a whole could be allocated for leisure use, with a masterplan to be prepared as Supplementary Planning Guidance to provide a framework for acceptable development.

Airport

Introduction

A submission has been received proposing the construction of an airport with runways on land that would be reclaimed from the Severn Estuary to the south-east of Redwick, and terminals and related development on land to the north of the operational part of Llanwern Steelworks and south-east of Underwood in the Bishton and Wilcrick area. This airport would not be a small facility as this would not justify the significant building costs, including land reclamation and surface transport links. A major facility would be likely to have significant economic effects.

The Issues

International airport development is not an issue over which the LDP has jurisdiction, national government has that responsibility. There would, however, be major implications for the local area, and many related developments would be subject to local planning control. There is therefore an important procedural issue as to how the LDP should handle the proposal. Local planning authorities normally only have powers down to the low water mark, and the runways would extend beyond that boundary.

A key consideration is that there is a clear lack of Government support for the project, which is of significance in that the decision on such a development would rest with it.

At the regional level are issues as to what share of passengers an airport on Severnside could expect to attract, and what might be the effect on existing airports, notably Cardiff and Bristol. Given the limited size of catchment relatively speaking in South Wales and the South West of England, there are also issues as to how much traffic the airport could expect to draw from elsewhere in the UK. Of significance to this will be Government policy on new airport capacity in the UK.

Environmental concerns are also issues at a number of levels. At a strategic level, the issue of carbon emissions from air travel would be a consideration, and what is the appropriate amount of airport capacity to be provided nationally.

At the site specific level, there would need to be imperative reasons of overriding public interest to allow airport development as this would be likely to have a significant impact on the Severn Estuary, which is a European designated site: the Estuary is a Special Protection Area for birds (SPA) under the European Habitats Directive. The estuary is also a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) under the Directive, and as such has to be treated as if it were already designated until such time as the formal decision is made. The Estuary is also designated as a Wetland of International Importance (a Ramsar site), and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a British Government designation. The coastal levels are also SSSIs.

The Options

A1 Do Nothing

In view of Newport City Council not having the jurisdiction to approve an international airport, the LDP could exclude any specific attention to the concept pending any favourable indication of support from the Government.

A2 Support the Concept of an Airport

The LDP could give some support to the concept, although this would probably have to be limited until formal proposals had been submitted under relevant legislation.

A3 Not Support the Concept of an Airport

The LDP could state that an airport proposal would not be welcomed, for example for reasons of environmental impact, financial viability or lack of Government commitment.

A4 Note the Concept

In view of the uncertainties of the proposal and the enormous amount of studies that would be required to establish, for example, the need for an airport, the benefits of a Newport location compared to any other, financial viability, and to assess its potential sustainability in its widest sense, including in economic, social and environmental terms, the LDP should just note the proposal. Should further information become available, and if there should be some indication of willingness on the part of Government to address the issue, then this should be reflected in a subsequent review of the LDP.