



Population, Household Growth and Housing

Topic Paper No 10 – Summary

Introduction

The LDP is first and foremost a land use plan that identifies site specific development opportunities in response to the needs of the community for more housing, jobs, services and facilities. It also seeks to preserve, protect and enhance where appropriate, those aspects of the built and natural environment which are important in defining the quality and sensitivity of the places we value, enjoy, move through, and live in. The ultimate aim of the LDP will be to deliver sustainable development.

The LDP is a vehicle for the Council to define its key growth and development priorities and will provide the ongoing framework of policies to guide decisions on planning applications.

Purpose of this Topic Paper

This is one of a series of Topic Papers produced by the Council to inform the development of the LDP. Their aim is to interpret the relevant evidence in relation to the specific topic and identify the key issues that need to be considered in developing the LDP.

This paper deals with one of the main growth issues that the plan has to resolve, that is meeting the needs for housing.

Whilst the broader purpose of the planning system is to manage the development and use of land in the public interest, one of the main things it does is to facilitate the delivery of new housing. This role is not simply to meet the needs of developers, but rather to respond to the genuine

needs of our communities, our economy, and future generations for a choice of suitable and affordable homes.

As well as ensuring that the homes it allocates are all capable of being provided in a viable and timely manner, addressing significant levels of need for affordable housing in Flintshire, as well as accommodating an ageing population and other specific needs groups, and levels of sub regional travel to work and migration, will be a significant challenge for the LDP.

Policy Context

Whilst the LDP is a new plan for Flintshire, it will be developed within a framework that comprises:

- National policy and guidance (Planning Policy Wales/Technical Advice Notes);
- The Wales Spatial Plan
- The UDP
- Existing patterns of development/communication
- Existing constraints e.g. flood risk
- Wider local evidence base

Amongst other things, National Housing Policy seeks to provide more housing of the right type, offering more choice including higher standards of energy efficiency and sustainability, in terms of where they are located, how they are designed, and how they integrate with existing communities and infrastructure.

Given the continuing economic circumstances, building more homes is seen by the Welsh Government Minister for Housing and

Regeneration to “not only meet growing housing need, but also generate growth and jobs, provide work to help people out of poverty... The private and public sector must be enabled and supported to play a full role in building more homes”.

The LDP is clearly a key mechanism for the delivery of housing to meet identified needs, and whilst this is an important aspect of the plan making process, it has the potential to become an overly dominant issue, as was the case with the UDP.

Given the importance of Flintshire’s economic prosperity not only to the County itself but to the wider sub-region, the strategy for the LDP will need to focus on economic recovery and job growth, where housing will form an important part of the infrastructure required to support this economic agenda.

The Role of the Plan

In delivering housing within sustainable residential environments, the Plan will need to do a number of things:

- Use Welsh Government housing Projections as the starting point for assessing housing requirements;
- Undertake a robust assessment of economic growth over the Plan period and how this translates into a need for new housing
- Ensure that sufficient land is genuinely available or will become available to provide a 5-year supply of land for housing;
- Develop policies to meet the challenges and particular circumstances evident in the local area;
- Devise a sustainable settlement strategy which housing development in an appropriate manner;
- Follow a search sequence to identify the most sustainable locations for development, starting with the re-use of previously developed land, and make the most efficient use of land it allocates;
- Consider a community’s need for affordable housing in formulating its policies;
- Recognise, where they exist, specific needs for housing including the accommodation needs of an ageing population and of Gypsies and

Travellers;

- Consider the need for housing in rural areas carefully, in order to balance those needs with the potential impacts on the environment and avoiding unsustainable travel patterns which are reliant on the private car.

Population and Housing Trends

There are a number of key trends relating to Flintshire’s population which have an important bearing on how the Plan should be developed. These relate to the fact that:

- Population growth is slowing down in Flintshire in comparison to historical trends (the last 30 years). 2011 Census based WG projections indicate that Flintshire’s population is only likely to grow by 2% over the plan period for the LDP;
- This is due to a combination of changes in the trends for both components of population change i.e. natural change (births and deaths) and migration. Positive natural change is slowing down (more births than deaths) and migration change is neutral;
- Flintshire’s population age structure is aging which will have implications on the demand for new housing as well as more specialized types of housing need.

In terms of housing provision, the UDP plan period covered the years 2000 to 2015 and that Plan set out to provide a housing requirement of 7,400 homes or 493 homes per annum. That requirement has not been met and is unlikely to be during the remaining life of the UDP. Whilst acknowledging that the time taken to produce that plan may have had some bearing on the availability of development land, the main factors involved in not delivering the planned development do not relate to the lack of available land or a failure of policy, but rather centre on the global economic crisis which affected the ability and willingness of developers to build homes, and the ability of those with a need for housing to actually satisfy that need.

The present significant quantum of available housing land, a further longer term land bank of sites, and the relatively low completions rate all

serve to indicate that there is plenty of land currently available for housing development, but that owners and developers are taking a cautious approach to bringing sites forward. These are factors that the LDP process will need to take into account in setting out its approach to meeting the housing requirement for the LDP.

Housing Need and Demand

The amount of housing provision within the LDP is largely determined by population and household projections produced by the Welsh Government. These projections are the starting point in forecasting the amount of housing required over the Plan period. Unfortunately, whilst 2011 Population projections were published by WG in July 2013, the publication of 2011 Household projections is significantly overdue.

In their absence, the latest available Household projections are 2008 based figures which predict a growth in households between 2015 and 2030 of 5,900 households.

Whilst this is a relatively low level of projected demand, their use as a guide to developing the LDP housing requirement must be caveated by the later 2011 figures yet to be published which may show a higher trend. That said, it is difficult to predict what the 2011 figures might be. There are also other factors and options that need to be taken into account in considering the appropriate housing requirement for the LDP:

- Resisting the false argument that ‘undelivered’ UDP housing requirement should be ‘added-on’ to the LDP;
- Recognising that household formation trends might result in lower 2011 Household projections;
- What level of housing is required to support economic recovery and job growth?
- The relatively low level of housing completions despite the significant availability of housing land?
- The significant landbank of available housing

land both within the 5-year supply and longer term?

- The implications of current supply, completions and the landbank on the level of need for new sites?
- The need for flexibility in site allocation/land availability to ensure delivery of the Plan’s housing requirement.

Housing Supply

The Plan must ensure that there is a supply of land for housing which meets the housing requirement figure but also ensures a 5 year supply of housing land over the Plan period. The requirement in Planning Policy Wales to ensure that sufficient land is available for housing is monitored on an annual basis by the preparation of a Joint Housing Land Availability Study. The study provides a statement of land availability for development planning and management and where an insufficient supply is identified, it provides a statement of the steps the Planning Authority will take to address the shortfall.

In terms of the level of potential current supply, the draft Statement of Common Ground for the 2013 Joint Housing Land Availability Study is the most recent evidence on housing completions and supply. The study shows an agreed 5-year supply of **2,307** units, rising to **3,982** units when disputed sites are included. The Council is still awaiting the Inspector’s decision regarding the 2013 JHLAS and the above level of supply is therefore subject to potential change.

As well as the 3,982 potential units within the 5-year supply, there are a further **1,162** units that are in the 3i category (i.e. outside of the present 5 year supply). Whilst subject to re-assessment as part of the LDP, this represents a potentially extended land bank of **5,142** units, however all of these figures are currently subject to change and review.

Housing Balance Sheet

Once the Council has sight of the Welsh Government household forecasts it will seek consensus, from a range of scenarios based on different assumptions and policy directions, on a housing requirement figure for the Plan. This will then enable the Council to prepare a Housing Balance Sheet which will set out in tabular form the various elements which comprise the supply of land with which to meet the identified housing requirement. This balance sheet will identify that element of the housing requirement that will need to be met by identifying new land allocations in the Plan. In brief the various elements comprise:

- **Commitments** – a robust assessment of commitments (existing permissions) to ensure that they are viable and capable of delivering completions over the Plan period
- **Small sites and conversions** – making an allowance for likely permissions that are likely arise over the Plan period based on an assessment of whether past trends are likely to continue (avoiding double counting).
- **Windfall sites** – making an allowance for large sites (10 or more units) that are likely to arise over the Plan period based on settlement capacity study (avoiding double counting)
- **Residual requirement** – the element of the housing requirement that must be met through new housing land allocations. Allocations must be based on a robust assessment of viability and deliverability to ensure that they are realistic and will result in completions during the Plan period.
- **Flexibility allowance** – ensuring an adequate level of flexibility based on the Plan's overall housing requirement figure to allow for unforeseen circumstances in the delivery of sites (rule of thumb 10% flexibility as starting point)

Making assumptions about the level of completions 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 as well as new permissions that may come forward over that time, allows an LDP Housing Balance Sheet to be drawn.

Issues to be addressed by the Plan

Sustainability based:

- *Evidence and take account of the full range of housing needs to be met;*
- *Ensuring that the previous under provision of housing is considered as one of the factors in informing the determination of the housing requirement figure*
- *Make full use of the housing landbank before identifying land for new allocations;*
- *Direct new housing development to the most sustainable locations, understanding the range of services, facilities, and infrastructure available or needed to support development;*
- *the need to identify brownfield land alongside a range of greenfield sites which are viable and deliverable, and which capable of contributing to and maintaining a 5 year supply of housing land over the Plan period*
- *Ensure that housing sites are viable and deliverable in order to ensure their development as well as the provision if community benefits via S106/CIL;*
- *Ensure that a sensitive and sustainable approach is taken to meeting housing needs in rural Flintshire.*

Spatial Planning based:

- *Assess the level of housing needed to support an economic recovery/growth strategy;*
- *Set an appropriate and achievable level of affordable housing for the plan area based on local need and viability;*
- *Set out a sustainable settlement/locational strategy;*
- *Consider the need or otherwise to review green barriers;*
- *Ensure that a 5-year supply of land can be sustained;*
- *Build in an early review of the plan based on housing land take-up;*
- *Develop clear policy criteria to deal with*

development proposals on unallocated sites;

- *Emphasise through a clear policy the limited opportunities for development in the open countryside;*
- *Include clear development control policies to provide guidance on design, layout, density, access, amenity, parking and open space in relation to residential development;*
- *Develop policies to identify what developer contributions will be required towards the community impacts of development.*

Potential Policies for the Plan

Strategic:

- a. Sustainable Settlement Strategy
- b. Housing Requirement figure / Affordable housing

Detailed:

- a. New Housing Development Proposals
- b. Croes Atti?
- c. Northern Gateway?
- d. Holywell Textile Mill?
- e. New Dwellings outside Settlement Boundaries
- f. Sites for Gypsies and Travellers
- g. Housing Density and Mix