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26 June 2013

**ANGLESEY & GWYNEDD JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:
Consultation Draft on Preferred Strategy**

About us

Bangor Civic Society campaigns for and promotes the built and natural environment of Bangor. The Society is recognised by the Civic Trust for Wales and by Gwynedd Council for the purpose of development consultation. We believe that a careful balance needs to be made between protecting our historic buildings and open spaces, whilst at the same time supporting quality developments which lead to improved facilities and employment creation.

Support

The Society is glad of an opportunity to respond to the JLDP. On balance, we are generally supportive of the overall approach and Strategic Policies. We particularly commend the following:

PS1 Sustainable Development
PS2 Climate Change
PS5 Infrastructure and Developer Contributions
PS8 Flourishing Economies
PS14 Natural Environment
PS19 Welsh Language and Culture
PS20 Community Infrastructure
PS22 Sustainable Transport.

In these and elsewhere there seems to us a positive approach toward some of the key issues which concern us as a Society. These include:

- Provision of more and affordable housing for local people
- The need to provide more local, skilled and better-paid work, especially for young people
- The serious risk of coastal flooding
- Protection of the natural environment and biodiversity
- Enhancement of the built environment, together with a higher standard of design for new developments.

Concerns

There are some topics where we feel further consideration is needed. Among these are:

- Any new pylons or cables to the west of Bangor
- Measures to tackle traffic across the Strait
- Getting the right balance in new housing provision between local people, new-comers and students

- Alternatives to Wylfa B. While it is right to make detailed plans in case this major project does take place, it is surely right to think about the consequences of it not happening. A rapid expansion of renewable energies, especially in research and development, and wider land use issues (e.g. solar farms) all have implications across the Plan area.
- We also query whether nuclear really does have a “significant role” in reducing greenhouse gases, when the whole carbon life-cycle is taken into account, including the enormous financial costs of de-commissioning.

Bangor as a City

We are pleased that the Plan recognises Bangor’s position as a sub-regional hub. Its rail and bus services are reasonable by UK standards, but more will need to be done to tackle growing traffic levels entering the city.

Correspondingly we welcome the suggestion of a Park and Ride.

In the longer term, another Park and Ride system could operate from the still unoccupied Bryn Cegin Business Park to the south of the city.

Given that there is widespread evidence in the UK that providing extra highway capacity simply generates more traffic, we do not support in policy terms or in value for money the concept of a third road bridge over the Menai Strait.

Bangor has very serious problems with student housing, which we deal with in Q3. It is badly in need of a coherent City Plan, and hope the JLDP process can assist here.

Bangor is not alone in facing economic difficulties in its High Street, but we still feel that a more urgent approach is needed to restore vitality to this important part of the city. In particular, we urge the authorities to:

- Look at ways of decreasing excessive business rates for small-scale local shops
- Examine flexible ways for short-term use of empty shops
- Cease granting permission for large-scale student housing in the High Street
- Look at ways of lessening car-parking charges on certain days and quiet times of the year
- Provide greater on-street accessibility to those with mobility difficulties.

It is generally felt that the city receives inadequate tourist publicity - in particular, for its splendid pier - and that more needs to be done here.

Lastly, in the interests of coherent planning – particularly with housing development – it is surely time to adjust the city’s boundaries. Page 56 discusses Bangor’s role and states that ‘Settlement boundaries will be amended to reflect the proposed development’. We would support this.

RESPONSE TO JDLP QUESTIONS

Q.1. Are there any other land use planning issues that should be considered?

What are they and why?

We have mentioned above the need for an alternative strategy should Wylfa B not go ahead.

Has a Landscape and Visual Assessment been made?

Q.2 Do you agree that the Vision and Objectives adequately address the issues identified in Chapter 4? If you disagree, what additional objectives need to be considered and/or how should the vision be amended?

We believe the Vision and Objectives are adequate.

Q.3 Do you agree that the preferred housing growth option is the most appropriate to meet the social, economic and environmental issues of the plan area? If you disagree, what do you feel should be the most appropriate level of housing growth and why?

We do not dispute the general trends in housing growth, and support the medium option chosen. However, the lack of available and affordable housing remains a major matter of concern, and we are not certain that this will be fully addressed within the Plan.

Allied to this is the vexed question of student accommodation. Simply allowing a laissez-faire approach to this issue does not constitute 'Planning'. There must be some limit to student provision in the city. As it is, whole streets and neighbourhoods are being given over to students, with a very serious loss of community cohesion, civic pride and economic loss (via lack of Council Tax income) to the city. Additionally, although most students are well-behaved, a significant minority create noise and anti-social behaviour and many create extra public costs through dealing with litter and household rubbish. These problems are being exacerbated by the growth of Houses in Multiple Occupation, many of which appear to be unlicensed and beyond any public control. The Society believes a strategic approach is necessary to this whole problem, rather than the ineffective piecemeal one at present.

Q.4 Do you agree that the preferred spatial option is the most appropriate means of distributing growth in the Plan area? If you disagree, what do you consider to be the most appropriate spatial strategy?

Yes, though with moves to extend Bangor's boundary.

Q.5 Do you agree that the preferred strategy and strategic policies provide an appropriate framework for the delivery of the joint LDP's vision and strategic objectives, as set out in Chapter 5? If you disagree, please give your reasons.

We support the Preferred Strategy and Strategic Policies as an appropriate framework.

Q.6 Do you agree with the proposed structure of the Deposit Joint LDP?

Yes.

Q.7 If you have any further comments or suggestions on the Preferred Strategy Document, please submit them below. [Specify].

Ageing Population. This subject has major implications across a wide range of topics, notably housing, health, communities, poverty and transport. In particular, there is both the major opportunity of expanding high quality care homes in our area but with the concern that carers will not be able to afford housing. Consideration should be given to having this topic as a Strategy in its own right.

Accessibility

An ageing population brings with it a whole range of mobility issues. For example, in time even public transport becomes problematic, and car use can be a necessity. There are issues of car parking and mobility access to shops and other facilities to consider.

Poverty Alleviation

Another major issue which could do with greater emphasis in the document.

Minorities

Bangor is home to several large minority groups. Have their needs and views been fully considered?

CONCLUSION

This concludes the response by the Bangor Civic Society.

We look forward to being involved in the next stage of the JLDP process.

Sarah Andrews

CHAIR, BANGOR CIVIC SOCIETY.