
REPORT TO THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

6th May, 2025

TITLE: Approach to producing the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for North Wales

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report provides an introduction for the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee on progress with preparing a Delivery Agreement (DA) for the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for North Wales, as well as highlighting the broad programme for development of the SDP, and some of the key matters it needs to consider.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. To note the position with the SDP.

3. REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. To ensure that the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee is made fully aware of the approach to be taken with the SDP and the main stages involved in the plan making process.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. New Statutory powers and duties were imposed on Corporate Joint Committees by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, relating to regional economic well-being, spatial planning, and transport planning.
- 4.2. The aim is to promote collaborative regional working to deliver more effective outcomes for communities by ensuring key issues, development and associated infrastructure is planned for in an integrated and comprehensive way, which is aligned tightly to economic development ambitions and Welsh Government's vision for a more strategic approach to both land-use and transport planning.
- 4.3. In regard to spatial planning, the statutory duty to prepare both a Local Development Plan (LDP) and an SDP is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Town and Country Planning (Strategic Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2021 (SDP Regulations) were subsequently made enabling CJsCs to prepare an SDP. A draft SDP Manual was issued to all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Autumn 2022, which it is anticipated will be finalised in Spring 2025. The draft Manual provides guidance on high-level timelines to produce an SDP and is detailed and prescriptive, anticipating that an SDP should take five years to produce.

- 4.4. It is not anticipated therefore that the SDP will be adopted until 2030 earliest, and in the interim LDPs must be kept up to date, ensuring, for example, that investment and sustainable development can continue to take place in a Plan-led way, providing confidence to all stakeholders including investors, developers, and communities. Ultimately, the preparation of SDPs will enable a more consistent, cost effective and efficient system for plan-making, with key decisions taken once at the strategic level. This will allow larger than local issues such as the scale of housing and jobs, and their spatial distribution across a number of LPAs, to be planned for in an integrated and comprehensive way.
- 4.5. To support the preparation of the SDP, an appropriate officer from the North Wales Local Authority network regarding regional spatial planning has been recruited to be the Regional Strategic Development Planning Officer (Corporate Joint Committee). This ensures representation for local authority (LA) and regional interests, allied to subject matter expertise. A secondment with the North Wales CJC started in this role in January 2025, initially on a shared time basis, and has been full time as of 1st April, 2025.

5. SDP PROGRESS

- 5.1. The Regional Strategic Development Planning Officer is initially supporting the preparation of the SDP programme plan and Delivery Agreement (DA), which is a public statement that contains the Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) setting out how and when stakeholders and the community can become involved in the Plan making process and a timetable (Regulation 10) for preparing the SDP - Regulation 11 (1). They will analyse the requirements of the SDP and liaise across all stakeholder groups, collaborating to produce the SDP.
- 5.2. The indicative timetable (as approved by the Corporate Joint Committee) for this work is outlined below:
1. CJC authorised the preparation of DA - January 2025
 2. Prepare draft DA and informally consult key consultees – March-April 2025
 3. Revise draft DA (if required) – April 2025
 4. Formally consult on DA – May-June 2025
 5. CJC to formally adopt DA – July 2025
 6. Submit adopted DA to Welsh Government – July-August 2025
 7. Publish DA on website and formally notify all stakeholders – asap following WG approval
- 5.3. A first draft Delivery Agreement has been prepared and has been sent to Welsh Government for their initial views as per task 2 above. It will then go to key consultees following Welsh Government feedback and any necessary revisions made (task 3) before it goes out for wider consultation (task 4). Depending on timely feedback these stages are essentially on track in relation to the indicative timetable above, with perhaps a minor slippage of a couple of weeks, but there is flexibility in the above timetable for this.

6. BROAD PROGRAMME FOR THE SDP

- 6.1. The Delivery Agreement is an essential project management tool given that the overall programme for preparing an SDP is likely to take at least five years. This mirrors the guidance that is set out in the draft SDP manual produced by Welsh Government. Part of the challenge for the CJC is to ensure that the plan can be delivered in a timely manner and in accordance with the Delivery Agreement, but the process will be regularly monitored to understand where savings of time and resources may be applied to shorten the overall timeframe for the SDP.

- 6.2. The SDP Regulations identify several key stages as part of the process of producing a plan which must be worked through in a sequential order, with realistic timeframes applied at each stage. These key stages and the purpose of them is summarised as follows:

SDP Key Stage	Main Purpose
Stage 1 Delivery Agreement	Set out how the plan will be produced, how people can participate in the process, what resources are required, and how long it will take. Informally consult on the DA as part of its development.
Stage 2 Pre-deposit – evidence base preparation	Collate robust evidence base and assess the key issues that the plan needs to tackle. Use this analysis to prepare growth and spatial options to inform development of a Preferred Strategy (PS). There should be a call for candidate strategic sites and locations for development, and the creation of a scope for the assessment of the sustainability and impact of the plan as it progresses.
Stage 3 Preferred Strategy	Identify the preferred growth and spatial strategy option for the broad level and location of strategic growth in the Region and publish this as the Preferred Strategy for the SDP. Carry out a formal six-week stakeholder and public consultation on the Preferred Strategy.
Stage 4 Deposit Plan	Having taken account of feedback from the PS stage, prepare a full version of the SDP containing all relevant strategic policies and proposals identified at the various earlier stages in the process. Carry out a formal six-week stakeholder and public consultation on the Preferred Strategy.
Stage 5 Submission	Prepare a formal response to the representations made to the Deposit plan and any schedule of changes that may result. The CJC to approve this response and agree to the submission of the plan as a sound plan that is capable of being adopted, for public Examination.
Stage 6 Examination	Formal Examination of the soundness of the SDP by an independent Planning Inspector(s) from Planning Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW).
Stage 7 Inspector's Report	Receive and consider the Inspector's Report following the Examination. Issue a notice of intention to adopt the plan.
Stage 8 Adoption	CJC to formally resolve to adopt the plan within 8 weeks of the receipt and consideration of the Inspector's Report.

- 6.3. It will also be important to consider the level of resources in place and required to meet this programme in a timely manner. There are several options under consideration in parallel with the production of the Delivery Agreement that include the creation of in-house planning roles within the CJC, use of specialist consultants, and understanding any capacity within Local Authorities to provide further support for the SDP.
- 6.4. Successful delivery of an SDP will likely require a combination of these options, depending on the stage reached, the budget available and where Local Planning Authorities are with their emerging LDP reviews. The DA must have sufficient capacity and flexibility to be able to respond to potentially significant milestones within its planned timeframe which could include the outcomes of Senedd or local elections, changes to national policy or guidance, or the availability of funding for investment in strategic projects. These are not easy to predict in advance.
- 6.5. Finally, the production of an SDP provides several opportunities for the CJC:
- To create a vision of the place we want the North Wales Region to be in 25-30 years' time;

- To establish a spatial context for the location of growth and development that will dovetail with the strategic transport context already well developed for the region;
- To facilitate the delivery of transformational economic and infrastructure projects linked to the availability of significant public funding;
- To demonstrate the significance of the role the region plays in the wider national and international market and economy;
- To set a consistent context for future Local Development Plans or LDP ‘lites’, where the levels and distribution of growth have already been determined, a strategic planning policy context has already been agreed, and local plans can simply focus on delivery.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Costs will be drawn from existing North Wales CJC budgets with the necessary support from the CJC’s Legal and Finance teams. The CJC will also seek further funding support from the Welsh Government.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The Corporate Joint Committee has a statutory duty to prepare a Strategic Development Plan further to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The specific requirements and steps to produce a Strategic Development Plan are set out in The Town and Country Planning (Strategic Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

APPENDICES:

None

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer:

“The report presents a clear and logical approach to creating the Delivery Agreement for the SDP. The decision pathway is appropriate and appropriately reflects the governance requirements.

ii. Statutory Finance Officer:

“I have no objections to the decision sought from the perspective of financial propriety. The predicted expenditure in 2025/26 in developing the Strategic Development Plan have been considered when setting the budget.”