

Advice provided to Denbighshire County Council by the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee on the relationship between the emerging North Wales Strategic Development Plan and Denbighshire's replacement Local Development Plan, to support the consideration by DCC Members of the need to discontinue the replacement LDP presently being prepared and begin the process afresh.

Questions posed by Cllr Merfyn Parry and received via Paul Mead, Development Manager, DCC.

Responding CJC officer: Andy Roberts, Regional Strategic Planning Manager

1. The current stage and anticipated timetable for preparing and adopting the North Wales Strategic Development Plan.

CJC Response: The SDP Delivery Agreement was approved by Welsh Government in February 2026 just prior to the start of the pre-election period for Senedd elections. Work on the plan therefore commenced in June 2026 following the outcome of those elections. The SDP timetable sets out a programme for plan preparation and adoption which is just over five years, with adoption planned for the first quarter of 2031, following Examination in Public of the plan, using essentially the same process as for LDPs. [The approved Delivery Agreement is available here](#). Work is currently underway on the SDP evidence base with an initial audit of available evidence almost complete and ready to report. This has included dialogue with all North Wales LPAs to gain an understanding of respective LDP evidence bases, where following the audit a gap analysis will be carried out to understand where resources may need to be invested to update the evidence.

2. Which planning matters will be determined regionally through the SDP and which will remain for Denbighshire's LDP.

CJC Response: Future Wales: The National Plan provides guidance on the potential content for SDPs in policy 19 – Strategic Policies for Regional Planning, where it sets out the following:



Policy 19 – Strategic Policies for Regional Planning



Strategic Development Plans should embed placemaking as an overarching principle and should establish for the region (and where required constituent Local Development Plans):

1. a spatial strategy;
2. a settlement hierarchy;
3. the housing provision and requirement;
4. the gypsy and traveller need;
5. the employment provision;
6. the spatial areas for strategic housing, employment growth and renewable energy;
7. the identification of green belts, green corridors and nationally important landscapes where required;
8. the location of key services, transport and connectivity infrastructure;
9. a framework for the sustainable management of natural resources and cultural assets;
10. ecological networks and opportunities for protecting or enhancing the connectivity of these networks and the provision of green infrastructure; and
11. a co-ordinated framework for minerals extraction and the circular economy, including waste treatment and disposal.

The Welsh Government requires the adoption of Strategic Development Plans in the North, Mid Wales, South West and South East regions.

The evidence audit referred to earlier has therefore followed these general policy areas and similarly encompasses Strategy, Housing, Employment, Gypsies and Travellers, Environment,

Transport, Energy, Water, Waste, Social Infrastructure, Minerals, Tourism and Leisure, Town Centres.

Rather than consider the above as being exclusively dealt with in the SDP, it may be better to consider that these are appropriate to make policy on at a regional scale, but that policy then provides guidance to each LPA as to how the outcomes of the regional guidance provided are implemented at a local scale via the LDP. The CJC will receive the evidence audit report referred to above in the near future and once reviewed this can be shared with each LPA.

Another key consideration of course is that whilst the SDP is being prepared then effectively no material planning weight attaches to it for the purpose of either guiding the development of individual LDPs or for use in any decision-making context. That said, the approach that the CJC has already set out and implemented is to work collaboratively with all the North Wales LPAs to both share progress and emerging evidence, as well as track progress on emerging LDPs. This will ensure that an LPA is aware of the emerging SDP in the review of its own plan. The CJC is clear that it cannot and will not take a unilateral approach to developing the SDP that may then impose a policy position on LPAs that compromises current or emerging local policy. Even when the SDP needs to look longer term to 2051 and beyond the end dates of all current LDPs, it will do so in collaboration with the LPAs.

3. *The legal requirement for Denbighshire's future LDP to be in general conformity with the SDP.*

CJC Response: Whilst that is correct, this can only formally apply in the event there is an adopted SDP already in place prior to adoption of an LDP review. That said, the emerging timetable for the SDP and the consideration of the need to commence a refresh of the Denbighshire LDP review are on similar timelines and with reference to the response above, provides an opportunity for informal collaborative working to ensure that regional and local policy can be developed in a context of mutual understanding and agreement. This applies to all of the LPAs in North Wales but clearly the degree of collaboration depends on the stage reached with respective LDPs, relative to where the SDP is.

4. *Whether the SDP could determine or materially influence Denbighshire's housing requirement, distribution of growth, settlement hierarchy, strategic employment sites and major infrastructure.*

CJC Response: The general answer to this is yes potentially, but this would depend on when the SDP is adopted and where an LPA is with its emerging LDP at that time. From the responses above and the collaborative approach that the CJC wants to take with LPAs, this should provide a less formal but potentially close relationship between emerging LDPs and SDPs so that there are 'no surprises' as respective plans reach a critical stage such as examination. In terms of each point raised, the way the SDP can influence these is as follows:

Housing Requirement – The SDP will set an overall housing requirement in a similar way to the way this is done for individual LDPs using the latest national population and household projections as a starting point. Like the LDP process, different growth options will be generated and 'tested' via the preferred strategy consultation, but with prior review with the LPAs beforehand. This process will also factor in emerging housing requirement figures in LDPs. Any deviation from the projections to take a more policy-based approach will as for LDPs, need to clearly be evidenced

and justified. There may be mileage in considering a region-wide policy approach to deliver more affordable housing as an example.

Distribution of Growth and Settlement hierarchy – In terms of these spatial influences, the SDP will seek to break down the regional growth (housing and employment) by each local authority area. This again is guided by the sub-national projections, adopted or emerging LDPs, and any emerging local policy position. Remember that the SDP will only focus on a strategic scale of development, so will either set thresholds for site sizes (e.g. housing sites of 3-500 homes or more, 50-100 ha of employment land) and/or may more generally identify broad amounts of housing or jobs that key locations should aim to deliver over the 25-year plan period. The spatial hierarchy therefore will only seek to identify the regionally significant growth areas/settlements which will be based on LDP tier one settlements with some further assessment of sustainability, infrastructure capacity, and connectivity. It will be for LDPs to determine the distribution of growth for the majority of their settlement hierarchies.

Strategic Employment Sites – This point has been covered above in relation to the scale of sites that the SDP will consider. A register of strategic sites will be compiled from existing sources and emerging plans as part of the evidence base development stage. It should be noted that the SDP is seeking to build on what is emerging locally but should also be thought of as an opportunity to consider longer term employment growth options that may well need to look beyond current LDP provision and end dates. The SDP is the opportunity to be creative and ambitious about sustaining growth into the longer term, for the region as a whole.

Major Infrastructure – This depends on what we define as major infrastructure and the plan will seek to consider all available sources and talk to the key infrastructure providers to identify current or planned infrastructure projects and factor those into the policy framework. This is no different from the process that LDPs have to follow. It should also be noted that depending on the type and scale of certain infrastructure, such development may fall outside of the LPAs remit to determine, instead being considered at a national scale via the SIP determination process.

5. *The implications of discontinuing and restarting Denbighshire's replacement LDP while the regional SDP is being prepared.*

CJC Response: The decision to cease work on the present LDP review and commence the review afresh is a matter for DCC but the CJC understands that this is driven by a significant change to evidence relating to newly published household projections from Welsh Government that would render the housing requirement in the present LDP review difficult to continue to justify. As for SDP development, this will rely on the latest available projections from Welsh Government to use in assessing growth options and setting a housing requirement and as such, the opportunity exists for DCC to align its proposed refreshed review with the emerging SDP evidence base which creates natural synergies in terms of using the same sources to consider appropriate levels of growth. From comments made above, the CJC does not consider that it would be appropriate to prepare an SDP unilaterally and impose this on LPAs, but rather to work collaboratively to ensure that work on LDPs dovetails with the emerging SDP.

6. *Whether restarting could result in evidence, consultation and other work being duplicated or subsequently overtaken by the SDP.*

CJC Response: As per previous responses given, there are significant potential benefits of aligning respective LDP and SDP processes and timetables, around evidence gathering, strategy development, growth optioneering, and policy development. The CJC is committed to taking a

collaborative approach with LPAs, irrespective of where they are with their LDP review process. The CJC has already committed to sharing the outcomes of the current evidence review process underway and the outcomes of any further work on growth options and spatial hierarchy.

7. *Whether Denbighshire may ultimately be required to prepare a more limited form of LDP beneath the regional SDP.*

CJC Response: This option in effect already exists in terms of the option to prepare an LDP 'Lite', but this is dependent on there being an adopted SDP in place first of all. An emerging SDP carries little weight and any LPA who is considering or needs to review its present LDP needs to commence this, as it is a statutory duty in its own right for the Authority to have an up to date development plan, and given the likely adoption date of the SDP (2031) there is no realistic justification to delay an LDP review, on the basis of waiting for the SDP to be prepared and adopted.

8. *What opportunities Denbighshire members, including the Strategic Planning Group and Full Council, will have to influence the preparation of the SDP before decisions are made by the CJC.*

CJC Response: Apart from the regular dialogue and collaboration between officers of the CJC and each respective LPA, the most obvious way for an LPA to influence the SDP is by maintaining progress with its LDP review, including evidence gathering, as these are the principle means that the CJC will use to track progress and build into the SDP, emerging growth options and policy priorities, certainly for the first half of the 25 year SDP plan period. After that each Council has a direct connection to the SDP as respective portfolio holders for planning comprise the CJC Strategic Planning Sub Committee who act as a steering group for SDP preparation, and link back to respective LDP review processes. The CJC Strategic Planning Manager would be more than happy to provide regular updates to respective LDP Panels or Preparation Groups and will leave this open invitation for respective groups to consider and extend invitations if required.