MEETING	Communities Scrutiny Committee
DATE	19 November 2026
TITLE	New Local Development Plan – Key Issues, Vision, Strategic Objectives, Growth Options and Strategic Distribution
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	Role to scrutinise the Local Development Plan / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
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AELOD CABINET	Councillor Craig ab Iago

1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

1.1 The preparation of a new Local Development Plan for Gwynedd which will meet the housing, employment, social and environmental needs of the county's residents over the next 15 years, has been identified as a priority project in the Council's Plan 2023-28.

1.2 The Full Council approved the Delivery Agreement and submitted it to the Welsh Government for their approval at its meeting on 7 March 2024.

1.3 In the 'Strategic options, vision and objectives' stage, the aim is to identify and test strategic options, agree on a clear vision that's relevant to the area, decide what kind of place the Plan area should aim to be, and agree on the main objectives of the Plan.

1.4 It is an opportunity for the Committee to submit comments/recommendations for consideration.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- Is the vision clear and ambitious enough?

  The vision (which can be found in part 4 of appendix 1) is based on an understanding of the relevant economic, social, environmental and cultural issues highlighted within the Issues identified in the document.

- What strategic objectives have been identified?

  The strategic objectives are set out in Part 5 of the document in appendix 1.

- Do the draft objectives need to be modified?

  A consultation is scheduled to take place in January 2027 on the Key Issues, Vision, Strategic Objectives, Growth and Spatial Distribution Options document. This will be an opportunity for those who want to have their say on the document including the strategic objectives (see para 6.2)

- What are the next steps?

The next steps are outline in part 9 of the report.

3. Summary and Key Issues

3.1 The document in appendix 1 forms a key part of the preparation of the new LDP and, through public consultation, is an opportunity to gather views and evidence. It includes the key issues in the area and a draft vision for addressing those issues through the new LDP, strategic objectives, and strategic growth and distribution options. No decisions have been made at this point.

4. Background

4.1 This report introduces the Gwynedd Key Issues, Vision, Strategic Objectives and the Growth and Spatial Distribution Options (2024-2039) (Appendix 1)

4.2 LDP preparation is an evidence based process and must be consistent with Welsh Government legislation and guidance. Including the Development Plan Manual (Edition 3) and Planning Policy Wales (edition 12). Appendix 2 outlines the steps of preparing an LDP.

Document Purpose

4.3 The document at Appendix forms a key part of the preparation of the new LDP and, through public consultation, is an opportunity to gather views and evidence on:

- Key Issues, challenges and opportunities facing the Gwynedd LPA (Part 3.0)
- the Draft Vision (Part 4.0)
- draft Strategic Objectives (Part 5.0)
- Growth Options (Part 6.0)
- Spatial Distribution Options (Part 7.0)

4.4 Welsh Government guidance emphasises that plans should be developed by gathering evidence, testing options and engaging with stakeholders prior to the preparation of a Preferred Strategy.

4.5 The paper is divided into 7 sections. Below is a brief overview of the contents of the paper:-

<u>Part 1 – Background and Purpose</u>

4.6 This section sets out the purpose and context of the new Local Development Plan and presents an overview of the consultation document, that is seeking to gather the views of stakeholders and the public on the key issues, vision, strategic objectives, and growth and spatial distribution options in order to inform the development of the Plan's Preferred Strategy. It clearly states that no decisions have been made at this point.

<u>Part 2 – Policy Context</u>

4.7 The main national, regional and local policies, strategies and other evidence that must be considered in the preparation of the new Local Development Plan are set out in this section. This provides the policy context that will need to be considered. The LDP will need to be based on sound evidence whilst also demonstrating compliance with the documents highlighted. It sets out the strategies that are important to consider as part of the preparation of the new LDP. The policy framework set out in this section helps to ensure that the Local

Development Plan is based on sound evidence and aligns with relevant priorities and strategies at all levels.

Part 3 – Key Issues

4.8 This section sets out the main issues, challenges and opportunities that the new Local Development Plan needs to respond to in order to support sustainable communities and facilitate appropriate growth in Gwynedd. It explains the evidence and sources of information used to identify these issues, including national and local policies and strategies, the performance of previous plans, stakeholder input, and the views of local residents and people who working the area. These key issues form the basis for shaping the vision, objectives and strategy of the new Plan.

Part 4 – Vision

4.9 This section sets out the rationale and framework used for the development of the vision of the Local Development Plan, to ensure that the draft vision reflects local circumstances, responds to the key issues and provides a clear strategic direction for development and land use in the area over the period of the Plan.

Part 5 Strategic Objectives

4.10 The relationship between the vision, key issues and strategic objectives is explained in this section, highlighting how the objectives will provide a basis for the development of the Plan's policies. The section also explains the policy and legislative framework that informs the objectives, ensuring that they contribute to the principles of sustainable place-making and align with wider well-being goals and priorities. The strategic objectives are grouped by theme, and the themes are based on priorities in the Council's Plan. A table sets out the link between the Strategic Objectives and how they respond to the Key Issues outlined which provides a clear structure for achieving the vision.

Part 6 – Growth Options

4.11 This section outlines the evidence base and strategic considerations that inform the growth options for the Local Development Plan. It explains the relationship between population growth, housing and employment, emphasising the need to ensure that the level of growth supports the economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives of the area. This section outlines the approach used to develop different growth options including consideration of historical performance, demographic and employment forecasts which is consistent with standard modelling recognised by the Welsh Government. Five growth options are outlined to provide an adequate range of growth options for consultation.

Part 7 – Spatial Distribution Options

4.12 The options for distributing housing growth within the Plan area are outlined in this section, showing four different options for distributing the growth in the LDP area.

Growth Options

4.13 *Edge Analytics* who are a specialist company were commissioned to formulate a variety of statistical scenarios for demographic growth. These scenarios are **based on the demographic profile of the area, past trends and housing construction information, together with the Welsh Government's population and household projections and**

employment prospects (based on 2022 data). The growth options set out in the document are derived from this work.

4.14 This work is not intended to set a final housing or employment figure for the Plan, but to provide a solid evidence base for considering a wide range of growth options, consistent with expectations set out in Welsh Government guidance, in order to facilitate discussion.

4.15 **It must be stressed, no decisions have been taken so far, and no growth option is favoured as this is the first step in the public consultation process.** When the consultation process has been completed, the Council will prepare a consultation report which will highlight the comments received. Responses received during the consultation will be taken into account in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, which is the next statutory step in the preparation of a Local Development Plan.

4.16 While this document is an important step in the preparation of the new Plan, it is only one step in the wider process of gathering evidence, engagement and assessing options prior to the preparation of a Preferred Strategy which will be the subject of a separate public consultation in the next stage of the process. **The Development Plan Manual emphasises the need to consider a range of reasonable options before developing the preferred strategy.**

4.17 The Preferred Strategy, which is the next step, needs to identify the

- key issues and challenges for the Plan area including the requirements of national, regional and local strategies.
- A vision for the Plan that is unique to local circumstances
- Embedding the placemaking approach
- Define housing and employment growth for the plan period, which is based on solid evidence, and how this growth will be distributed.
- Identify key growth sites/areas (if appropriate)
- Key strategic policies to achieve the vision, objectives and strategy
- Appendix setting out which policies from the existing plan may be retained, amended or removed
- Viability assessments to support the key/strategic sites (if required)
- List of Supplementary Planning Guidance to be prepared/updated

5. Additional Questions

- What information and evidence underpin the strategic choices, vision and objectives?

  The document is in appendix 1 which includes the strategic options, vision and objectives which have been developed by considering a wide range of evidence, including national, regional and local policies and strategies, Welsh Government guidance, the performance of the current Local Development Plan. Contributions have been received from the Planning Policy Working Group and Council departments. In addition, a non-statutory consultation was conducted to understand the views of residents and people who work in the plan area regarding the aspects of their area that they value most. The key issues, challenges and opportunities identified in the evidence have contributed to the development of the strategic vision and objectives.

The growth options are based on demographic and economic modelling carried out by Edge Analytics, using Welsh Government population, household and employment forecasts, along with historical data on housing developments and local trends.

- What were the comments of members of the Planning Policy Working Group on the document?

  Draft minutes of the Planning Policy Working Group meeting on 23 October 2026 and officers' response is at appendix 3. Members of the Working Group raised several questions and comments regarding:

  - The clarity of the data and the methodology underpinning the growth options.
  - If the employment and population projections were realistic.
  - The relationship between housing, population and employment.
  - Implications of potential economic developments, including developments such as Gwyndod (Wylfa Newydd).
  - The role of Bangor and different other areas of the Plan.
  - The relationship between the Council and Eryri National Park Authority.
  - The impact of the growth options on the Welsh language and Welsh-speaking communities.
  - The process used to narrow down the list of options and develop the five growth options and the four distribution options.

- What has changed as a result of their comments ?

  Following the Working Group's discussions, amendments were made to the document, including:

  - Corrected typographical and minor factual errors in some of the tables in Part 7.
  - Added explanatory text to provide more information about the rationale for selecting the five growth options and the four spatial distribution options to be included in the document.

- How much attention has been paid to the Welsh language and Welsh-speaking communities in the preparation of the document?

  The Welsh language and the sustainability of Welsh speaking communities was an important consideration in the preparation of the document. In identifying the key issues, evidence regarding the demographic, social and cultural characteristics of the area were considered, including factors that can influence the viability and sustainability of Welsh-speaking communities.

  The strategic objectives have been developed giving consideration to the Council's priorities and national policy requirements which recognise the importance of the Welsh language as part of the cultural well-being of communities. In addition, the impact of the Plan on the Welsh language will be a key consideration, alongside all other planning

issues, with that taking place at the next stage which will assess the growth and distribution options in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy.

During the Working Group's discussions, the need for further evidence regarding the implications of the growth options on the Welsh language was highlighted, and questions were raised as to which options would support the sustainability of Welsh-speaking communities. It was emphasised that it was not at this stage that an assessment of the growth options alongside an assessment of the Welsh language and all other plan considerations would be undertaken. These issues will be considered further at the next stage and as part of the assessment work and in gathering additional evidence before deciding on the Plan's Preferred Strategy.

6. Consultations

6.1 Members of the Planning Policy Working Group have had input into the formulation of the key issues, vision and strategic objectives. At the request of the Working Group, a non-statutory consultation was held in January, the main purpose of the consultation was to gather information and views to help ensure that the Local Development Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who live and work in the Plan area. Responses to the consultation were reported to the Working Group in July where it was confirmed that all the issues raised, which related to planning policy, had been outlined in the key issues.

6.2 A meeting of the Working Group was held to discuss the growth and distribution options on 23/10/26. The draft minutes of the Working Group meeting are included in Appendix 3[1]. A summary of the main issues raised as part of the discussion is set out above.

6.3 There has also been consultation with all Council Departments and the responses received will be considered and fed into the process and there will be ongoing discussion throughout the process.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Have you **involved** residents/service users? If not, when and how do you intend to consult with them?

7.1 As previously noted, a non-statutory consultation was held in early 2026 with the aim to gathering information and views to help ensure that the Local Development Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who live and work in the Plan area. Consultations have also begun with other Council Departments.

7.2 A consultation is scheduled to take place in January 2027 on the Key Issues, Vision, Strategic Objectives and the Growth and Spatial Distribution Options document. The statutory requirement for this stage is '*involve the specific and general advisory bodies before the LPA consults on the preferred strategy*' (Development Plans Manual). The specific and general consultation bodies are listed in the Delivery Agreement. To ensure that the process is inclusive, it is planned to go beyond the statutory requirement and hold a public consultation. The public consultation will give everyone the opportunity to express

[1] The minutes have not been agreed by the Working Group as a next meeting of the working group has not yet been held.

their views on various potential growth options for the Plan and how this growth will be distributed within the Gwynedd LPA.

7.3 It is intended to include specific consultation questions in the consultation draft of the document in order to encourage comments relevant to the document:

Key Issues

1. Do you agree with the key issues? Are there other key issues that should be included, or do any of the key issues need to be changed or deleted?

Vision

2. Do you agree with the vision for the Plan area?

Strategic Objectives

3. What are your views on the suggested Strategic Objectives? Do any further objectives need to be added?

Strategic Growth Options

4. Which growth option do you think is best suited to the Plan's Vision and Strategic Objectives?
5. Which growth option do you have best? Please clarify your answer.
6. Is there another growth option? If so, please provide details.

Spatial Distribution Options

7. Which spatial distribution option do you think is best suited to the Plan's Vision and Strategic Objectives?
8. Which spatial distribution option do you prefer? Please explain your answer.
9. Is there another spatial distribution option? If so, please provide details.

Have you considered **working together**?

7.4 The document has been compiled by considering evidence, national, regional and local policies and strategies. There has been consultation with relevant services within the Council, and discussions have taken place with the Planning Policy Working Group. In addition, the document recognises the need for continued collaboration with the Eryri National Park Authority, neighbouring authorities, Welsh Government and other key stakeholders in the development of the Preferred Strategy. The public consultation on the document will provide a further opportunity to gather views and evidence from a wide range of stakeholders.

What has been done or will be done to **prevent** problems from arising or worsening in the future?

7.5 The document has identified key evidence-based issues about demography, housing, employment, the economy, the environment, climate change, infrastructure and the Welsh language. By identifying the challenges and opportunities facing the local planning area of Gwynedd it is possible to ensure that the LDP is able to respond to them. By giving

stakeholders the opportunity to comment on a number of growth and spatial distribution options before proceeding to the Preferred Strategy there will be an opportunity to consider these comments and choose a strategy that is more likely to address future challenges and reduce long-term risks

How have you considered the **long-term** and what will people's needs be in years to come?

7.6 The document is part of the preparation of a Local Development Plan for the period 2024-2039 which therefore focuses on the long-term needs of Gwynedd's communities. In developing the growth options population, household and employment forecasts were used, along with an analysis of historical trends and local issues. The document seeks to understand how the Plan can respond to the key issues that have been developed and included in the document. The consultation will help to ensure that the vision and objectives of the Plan reflect the needs of present and future generations.

To ensure **integration**, have you considered the potential impact on other public bodies?

7.7 The key issues, vision, strategic objectives and growth options have been developed in the context of relevant national and regional policies, and consider implications for areas such as transport, education, health, infrastructure, natural resource management and community services. The document sets out the appropriate policies, strategies and priorities of other public bodies and as already noted that it will be important to work closely with the neighbouring LPAs in the development of the LDP. This consultation will be an opportunity for other public bodies to have their views on spatial distribution options and further engagement will take place as the plan develops.

8. Impact on Characteristics of Equality, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty

This is not relevant at this stage of the process. An impact assessment will be prepared at the appropriate stages of preparing the New Local Development Plan.

9. Next Steps

9.1 Prior to being published for public consultation, the document will be submitted to Cabinet on 8 December 2026 requesting comments on the consultation document and the permission to hold a public consultation in January 2027. The comments of the Planning Policy Working Group and the Communities Scrutiny Committee will be included in the report to Cabinet.

9.2 Following the consultation all comments will be considered by the Planning Policy Service. Evidence gathering and background paper preparation will continue, including commissioning, where necessary, studies and additional technical work. All information will be taken into account in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Key Issues, Vision, Strategic Objectives and the Growth and Spatial Distribution Options (2024-2039)

Appendix 2: Steps in the preparation of a Local Development Plan

Appendix 3: Draft Record of meeting of the planning policy working group