



Hearing Statement – Session 1 – Matter 1

Plan Preparation and RLDP Strategic Framework

On behalf of Parc Emlyn Developments Limited

Representor IDs 5620 & 5621

In respect of the Second Deposit Carmarthenshire

Revised Local Development Plan (2018 - 2033)

Deposit Plan site reference PrC3/MU1 – Emlyn Brickworks

(Other references SR/132/009, CA0629 and AS2/132/006)

20 September 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement is submitted in response to the Schedule of Matters, Issues and Questions, on behalf of Parc Emlyn Developments Limited ('Parc Emlyn'). It has been prepared by Adrian Thompson MRPTI, Director of Lightwater TPC.
- 1.2 The Statement is submitted in respect of **Matter 1** (Plan Preparation and RLDP Strategic Framework). It is comprised of the following sections
- 1 Introduction
 - 2 Response to question 1.10 (c)
 - 3 Response to question 1.10 (d)
 - 4 Response to question 1.10 (g)
 - 5 Response to question 1.11 (a)
 - 6 Response to question 1.13
 - 7 Response to question 1.16.
- 1.3 Where relevant the comments will refer back to the representations submitted on the Deposit Plan ('PED/DP').

Background

- 1.4 Parc Emlyn supports the allocation of land at the former Emlyn Brickworks for a residential-led, mixed-use development (site allocation PrC3/MU1) and the timing and number of new homes forecast to be delivered within the plan period.
- 1.5 However, the arbitrary exclusion of a large portion of the existing allocated area from the proposed allocated area, and its exclusion from within the defined settlement boundary, is not sound.
- 1.6 Parc Emlyn seeks amendments to the extent of the proposed allocated area and the defined settlement boundary line, to include all of Parc Emlyn's land.
- 1.7 An illustrative Initial Masterplan drawing was supplied with the representations submitted on the consultation on the Second Deposit Local Plan, the coloured areas of which depict the extent of the land which should be allocated.
- 1.8 Parc Emlyn owns the majority of the land which the Council propose be included in the site allocation PrC3/MU1, at the former Emlyn Brickworks (all except the blue 'community use' land as shown on the Initial Masterplan drawing). Parc Emlyn owns all the additional land which it proposes should be included in the allocation.

2. 1.10 (c) – Does the Strategy represent a sustainable approach to planning over the Plan period? And does it effectively link transportation, employment and residential growth?

2.1 Yes, the Strategy does represent a sustainable approach to planning over the Plan period.

2.2 Planning Policy Wales (ed 12 Feb 24) paragraph 3.42 says a balance should be achieved between the number of homes provided and expected job opportunities.

2.3 As stated in the current local plan at paragraph 5.5.2

The focus of the current spatial form and resultant distribution of existing housing and employment provision is within the established urban centres of Llanelli, Carmarthen, and the Ammanford/Cross Hands grouping of settlements. The focus on these settlements as identified ‘Growth Areas’ reflects their respective standing and their sustainability and accessibility attributes. The Growth Areas exhibit good accessibility through connections to the strategic highway network and the rail networks as well as public transport.

2.4 This is still the case today, if not indeed with some improvement, for example, with the completion within the Ammanford / Cross Hands area of the Cross Hands Economic Link Road, opening up both new employment and residential development opportunities. See also paragraph 11.546 of the Deposit Plan.

2.5 This illustrates how, in respect of the Ammanford/Cross Hands area at least, the Strategy will effectively link transportation, employment and residential growth.

- 3. 1.10 (d) – Does the Spatial Strategy maximise the use of previously developed land and adopt the sequential approach to the release of land as set out in Planning Policy Wales?**
- 3.1 Generally, yes, but the Strategy should go further, given the very clear preference Planning Policy Wales gives to the use of previously developed land over the release of greenfield sites, in paragraph 3.55 (edition 12). The guidance in the Development Plans Manual at page 120 (rolling forward allocations), explains how a Council can retain an existing allocation for regeneration purposes, without having to rely upon it as contributing to meeting the Plan’s proposed level of housing provision.
- 3.2 For example, the existing site allocation GA3/MU2, at the former Emlyn Brickworks Site in Pen-y-Groes, should be allocated again, rather than just a part of it, as proposed in the Deposit Plan (site allocation reference PrC3/MU1). Continuing to allocate this larger area of previously developed land for regeneration and development will help both to secure the delivery of the housing contribution the Council is relying on it for in this plan period and will help to secure continuity of delivery in the period beyond that, if not perhaps also modestly boosting supply in the current period.
- 3.3 This illustrates how the Strategy should go further to prioritise and maximise the use of previously developed land.

- 4. 1.10 (g) – What is the purpose of Policy SP13? Does it provide an appropriate framework for managing development in rural communities?**
- 4.1 The purpose of the second paragraph of Policy SP13 ('Development proposals in the countryside beyond identified settlements') is not clear. The development plan should be read as a whole and Policy SP13 must be read alongside Policies SD1, on development limits, and SP4, on a sustainable approach to providing new homes.
- 4.2 The explanatory text to Policy SD1, at paragraph 11.75, explains the purpose of defining development limits. The first two bullet points set out how the purpose is to restrain development outside the defined limits, and the second two bullet points set out how it is to direct new development to within the defined limits.
- 4.3 Policy SP4 carries forward into policy the approach set out in paragraph 11.75, saying,
- 'Proposals within the defined development limits will be permitted subject to the policies and proposals of this Plan.' and 'There will be a presumption against inappropriate housing development outside of the defined limits except where they are subject to other policies of this Plan.'
- 4.4 Policy SP13 appears to be contrary to this approach set out in Policies SD1 and SP4, because it supports development proposals in the countryside beyond the identified settlements, where it accords with the policies in the Plan.
- 4.5 For example, it seems unlikely the Council would consider Policy SP13 to provide support for a proposal for a major housing development at the former Emlyn Brickworks, on land which is part of the current local plan allocation but would lie west of the area the Council propose as an allocation in the new Local Plan and outside the proposed new defined settlement boundary line. Even if such a housing scheme could be shown to be in accordance with other policies in the Plan, Policies SD1 and SP4 would strongly indicate that planning permission should be refused.
- 4.6 The explanatory text to Policy SP13, in paragraphs 11.367 to 11.369, may be seeking to set out how this apparent contradiction might be reconciled, but the terms used are not specific enough to provide the clarity needed to understand what will and will not be supported. Furthermore, explanatory text is not policy. If the intention is for Policy SP13 to set out when exceptions might be made to the requirements of Policies SD1 and SP4 and if it is accepted that more detail should be provided on what those exceptions look like, then that clarity should be provided in the wording of Policy SP13 itself.
- 4.7 In the absence of greater clarity, Policy SP13 does not provide an appropriate framework for managing development in rural communities.

- 5. 1.11 (a) – What is the purpose of Policy SG1? And have the requirements of the allocated sites listed in the policy been clearly expressed?**
- 5.1 No comment as to the purpose of Policy SG1.
- 5.2 With regard to the requirements in respect of site reference PrC3/MU1 (Emlyn Brickworks), the following submissions are made.
- 5.3 A factual update should be made to the text (through a Matters Arising Change), to refer to the fact the Cross Hands Economic Link Road is now open.
- 5.4 In respect of one point in particular ('Provision is made for the delivery of community focused development'), the requirement is expressed with sufficient clarity. The development of the area south of the new spur link road has yet to be the subject of any pre-application community engagement. Further detail on the nature of the community focus within the development should be informed by that engagement. It would not be appropriate to seek to provide further detail at this stage.
- 5.5 Nonetheless, overall, there is a need for the requirements to be expressed more clearly, by adding a statement to confirm the location and extent of the allocation is shown on the Proposals Map. In so doing, the Proposals Map should be amended to take account of the representations already submitted on behalf of Parc Emlyn (PED/DP), which explain why the extent of proposed allocated area PrC3/MU1 should be enlarged to include all the land under the ownership and control of Parc Emlyn.
- 5.6 In the online version of the Deposit Plan, the Council has posted a Response to representations set out on behalf of Parc Emlyn on Policy SD1. For ease of reference, the Response says
- Disagree. The sites has been duly considered in the formulation and preparation of the LDP with the reasons for the non-inclusion of the elements noted in this objection set out within the Site Assessment Table and site proforma. The assessment of the site was undertaken in accordance with national guidance and the site assessment methodology and background/topic papers and the supporting evidence.*
- 5.7 However, this Response does not engage with the points set out in the representations submitted on the Deposit Plan ('PED/DP'), in particular, those at paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8. As set out below in relation to Question 1.13, neither the site assessment sheets nor the background/topic paper, nor the supporting evidence address the points raised in paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8.

6. 1.13 – Are the requirements of Policy SD1 clearly expressed and consistent with the requirements of national planning policy? and are the defined settlement boundaries flexible enough to allow the anticipated level of growth to be delivered?

- 6.1 No comment as to whether the requirements of Policy SD1 are clearly expressed and consistent with national policy.
- 6.2 The defined settlement boundary to Hands Cross / Pen-y-Groes is not flexible enough to allow the anticipated level of growth to be delivered.
- 6.3 The representations submitted on behalf of Parc Emlyn on the Deposit Plan (PED/DP) set out at paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 the importance of allowing a comprehensive approach to be taken to the planning and development of the site. This will optimise the potential to achieve the best place making.
- 6.4 The representations also set out that the best judge of which part of the site to bring forward first for development, is the developer. There is a view that the north western part of the site is likely to perform better as a first phase of development, because that is where the first homes are likely to sell fastest. This approach will attract the strongest level of confidence from an investment perspective. If the extent of the area is restricted as the Council propose then it is still possible development will come forward, but the location may be seen as weaker because sales may be slower. Whereas retaining the whole of Parc Emlyn's land within the site allocation will provide enough flexibility and contingency to strengthen the deliverability of the level of growth proposed in the Deposit Plan.
- 6.5 In the online version of the Deposit Plan, the Council has posted a Response to representations set out on behalf of Parc Emlyn on Policy SD1. For ease of reference, the Response says

The assessment of the site has been undertaken in accordance with national guidance and the Site Assessment Methodology and background/topic papers and the supporting evidence. Part of the site has been allocated for mixed use development under reference PrC3/MU1 and the development limits have been amended accordingly. The remaining part of the former LDP allocation has been removed as there are concerns that the site in its entirety cannot be delivered within the lifetime of the Revised LDP. This can be discussed further at Examination.

- 6.6 Since the submission of the PED/DP the Council have published the following documents
- Topic Paper – Growth and Spatial Distribution Part 1 – Housing (Update April 2024) (Examination Document reference CSD74), and
 - Position Statement – Key Sites – (April 2024) (Examination Document reference CSD120).

Neither document engages with the matters raised in the PED/DP.

- 6.7 In the Topic Paper the reason given for ‘exclusion from the revised LDP’ of the larger area is, ‘reduction in the site’s allocation’ (see the 42nd page of the document). There is no other commentary in the Topic Paper which would help to further explain the decision by the Council to exclude part of the existing site allocation from the new one.
- 6.8 The Position Statement confirms the site is a key site (see the fourth page). On the 12th page it provides some further information about the site, but no response to the PED/DP.
- 6.9 The following two documents are part of the suite of submission documents submitted by the Council for the Examination
- Site Allocation Assessments – Cluster 3 (February 2023) (Examination Document reference CSD106), and
 - a document containing the site assessment sheets for sites not taken forward for allocation (date unknown) (Examination Document reference CSD113).
- 6.10 In the Site Allocation Assessments document, on the 195th page, under ‘Additional Comments’, it says, ‘given that the site has been previously allocated with only a small portion of the previous allocation being developed, it is considered more realistic that a smaller area of the site is carried forward into the revised LDP which would be more manageable to develop.’
- 6.11 In the site assessment sheets document, on the 358th page, under ‘Additional Comments’ it says, ‘There are concerns regarding the deliverability of the whole site, and so it is considered appropriate to allocate part of the site for mixed use.’
- 6.12 None of the statements reported above provide a sufficient explanation for reducing the extent of the area proposed to be allocated. No objection is raised to the number of units the Council expect will be delivered in the Plan period; that is a matter covered in the Statement of Common Ground for the site. In respect of each document’s statement
- The Topic Paper explains nothing about the reasoning behind the proposal to reduce the extent of the allocated area.
 - The Position Statement is silent on the subject of the site area.
 - The statement in the Site Allocations Assessment Cluster 3 document would make sense if it were about being not too ambitious on the number of units the site will deliver. In contrast, it is not clear why a smaller site area will be any more or less realistic, or any more or less manageable, than the original site area, when it comes to delivering the units required.

- Similarly, the statement in the document containing the site assessment sheets for sites not taken forward for allocation, provides an explanation for the reduction in the number of units which the site can be relied upon to deliver in the Plan period, but not for reducing the amount of land in the site allocation.
- The online Response expresses concern about whether the site in its entirety can be delivered within the lifetime of the Revised LDP, but the change sought by Parc Emlyn does not suggest that it would. Rather, it seeks only the ability to choose where within its land ownership it would be most propitious to deliver the first houses.

- 6.13 The guidance in the Development Plans Manual (top of page 120) is that a Council can roll forward an allocation even though they cannot evidence it will be delivered, for example for regeneration purposes, so it will still be allocated in the plan but not be relied upon as contributing to the provision. It remains unclear why the Council chose not to follow this guidance, to maintain the extent of the site allocation but reduce the number of homes to a level the site can be relied upon to contribute in the Plan period.
- 6.14 Notwithstanding the above, even if there were grounds for reducing the extent of the allocated area, a further explanation would be required for reducing the extent of the defined settlement boundary line. No explanation has been advanced by the Council to explain that proposed change. See also paragraph 5.10 of the PED/DP.
- 6.15 Keeping the settlement boundary line at its current extent would still ensure there is enough flexibility to allow the anticipated level of growth to be delivered.
- 6.16 The Council online Response says the representations submitted on behalf of Parc Emlyn can be discussed further at the Examination. Parc Emlyn look forward to having that opportunity in the Hearing session.

7. 1.16 – How will the Plan apply the principles of sustainable placemaking contained in Policy SP12? [see also a and b]

- 7.1 The Deposit Plan increases the risk that sustainable placemaking will not be achieved, at least not at the former Emlyn Brickworks. As already stated above and in the PED/DP (paragraphs 5.2 to 5.3), the random subdivision of the site area would obstruct the ability to produce a comprehensive scheme of development across the site as a whole, and thus undermines the principles of sustainable placemaking.

[END]