NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Regeneration and Sustainable Development Cabinet Board
23 July 2018

Report of the Head of Planning and Public Protection
N. Pearce

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Welsh Government Consultation: National Development Framework – Issues, Options and Preferred Option

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider and agree the recommended response to the Welsh Government consultation on the National Development Framework – Issues, Options and Preferred Option.

Executive Summary

2. The current Welsh Government consultation seeks views on the emerging National Development Framework (NDF). The NDF will not be published in draft form until 2019 but the issues it should address, the vision, the objectives and the preferred option for achieving these are set out in the consultation. These will shape how the NDF is prepared.

3. This report seeks endorsement of the recommended responses to the consultation questions posed and seeks authorisation to submit the response to the Welsh Government.

Background

4. The NDF is scheduled to be published by the Welsh Government in September 2020. This new tier of Development Plan in Wales will set out a 20 year land use framework for Wales.

5. The purpose of the NDF is to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's national strategy *'Prosperity for All'* by developing a clear long term spatial direction for Government policy, action and investment.

6. The NDF will seek to achieve this by identifying key growth areas, the type and location of the infrastructure needed, by coordinating the delivery of housing, employment and connectivity infrastructure, and by directing key partners to help deliver the national spatial vision.

7. Future policy development in the form of Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs) will therefore be directed by the NDF.

Developing the NDF – Issues, Options & Preferred Option

8. Informed by the evidence gathering, engagement and consultation undertaken to date, the Welsh Government has published the main issues, options and preferred option for consultation.

9. Following the consideration of responses to the consultation, the Welsh Government will begin preparing the *draft* NDF, due for consultation in summer 2019. This consultation is therefore an important opportunity to provide views on the proposed approach to the NDF and to help shape the framework moving forward.

Issues

10. An overview of the key issues for the NDF is provided, including those relating to Culture; Climate Change; Decarbonisation and Energy; Digital Connectivity; Economy; Housing; Natural Resources; Transport; Welsh Language; and Health. These have informed the NDF vision, objectives, alternative options and preferred option.

Vision & Objectives

11. The vision sets out the Wales the Welsh Government wishes to see in 2040 and the objectives set out what the NDF is required to do in order to deliver the vision. Future monitoring of the NDF will be undertaken against the objectives.

Alternative Options

12. In considering how the NDF can deliver upon the objectives, the Welsh Government has considered 4 alternative options. These options considered alternative spatial approaches for the NDF focusing on:

- The strongest market areas;
- Communities across all of Wales;
- Decarbonisation and climate change; and
- Sustainable management of natural resources.

The Preferred Option

13. The preferred option entitled *'Sustainable Places'* is presented as a hybrid option drawing together the key strengths from each of the 4 options listed above.

14. The preferred option provides the framework for the development of the NDF, identifying the spatial issues that will be covered, the strategic direction for NDF policies, and is presented under 5 areas:

    - Placemaking;
    - Distinctive and Natural Places;
    - Productive and Enterprising Places;
    - Active & Social Places; and
    - Wales' Regions.

Consultation Response – Main Issues

15. The proposed detailed response to the consultation questions is set out in full in **Appendix 1**. A summary of the main issues raised is provided below.

16. ***NDF Vision*** – the vision is considered to be neither sufficiently clear nor ambitious enough and lacks spatial references that would make it distinctive to Wales. Consequently, it has been suggested that the vision needs to be reviewed in order to more clearly set out the aspirations for what Wales and its distinctive regions will (*ideally*) be like by 2040.

17. ***NDF Objectives*** – whilst there is broad agreement with the objectives, it has been suggested that they need to be reviewed to ensure a consistent approach throughout and to strengthen the wording where possible.

18. ***NDF Preferred Option*** – the main issues raised include:

    - *Level of Detail* – the preferred option is set out at much greater length and with a great deal more jargon and arguably confusion than the alternatives. It has been suggested therefore that the

preferred approach should be expressed in a much shorter, more succinct way with its relationship to the alternatives clarified.

- *Nationally Important Areas* – throughout there are numerous references to the fact that *'nationally important areas'* will be identified. The response highlights the need for clarity / transparency on the identification criteria to be used and the importance of ongoing engagement / consultation between the WG and LPAs in this respect.
- *National / Regional Housing Figures* – whilst there is an expectation that the NDF will include national ranges and targets for housing delivery, it is questioned whether it would be appropriate for the NDF to provide regional ranges / targets for housing delivery. It is argued that this would be too prescriptive and should more appropriately be undertaken at the regional level.

Financial Impact

19. There are no financial impacts in respect of this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

20. A Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment, it has been determined that this function does not require an Equality Impact Assessment.

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA)

21. In developing the NDF, the Welsh Government is undertaking a range of assessments to ensure the potential impacts of emerging policies are fully considered. The Welsh Government has combined these assessments into a single 'Integrated Sustainability Appraisal' (ISA).

22. The ISA includes a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which are key tools in achieving sustainability and positive environmental outcomes.

23. The ISA will also have assessed whether the emerging policies do not negatively impact on protected characteristic groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

Workforce Impacts

24. There are no workforce impacts in respect of this report.

Legal Impacts

25. There are no legal impacts in respect of this report.

Risk Management

26. There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Recommendation

27. That having considered the report, it is resolved to make the following recommendation for approval:-

    That the responses to the consultation questions set out in Appendix 1 be agreed and authorisation be given to submit the response to the Welsh Government.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

28. The recommendation is needed to ensure that the interests of the Authority are represented and in line with its various statutory duties.

Implementation of Decision

29. The decision is for immediate implementation and the relevant Scrutiny Chair has agreed to this course of action.

Appendices

30. Appendix 1 – Consultation Response Form: NDF Issues, Options and Preferred Option (July'18).

List of Background Papers

31. Welsh Government Consultation Document: NDF – Issues, Options and Preferred Option (April'18)
32. Integrated Sustainability Appraisal of the NDF – Interim Report (April'18)
33. Habitats Regulations Assessment of the NDF – Preliminary Screening Report (April'18)

Officer Contact

34. Ceri Morris – Planning Policy Manager - Tel: 01639 686320 / E-mail: c.morris1@npt.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

National Development Framework: Issues, Options and Preferred Option

This consultation seeks your views on the emerging National Development Framework (NDF). The NDF will not be published in draft form until 2019 but the issues it should address, the Vision, the objectives and the Preferred Option for achieving these are set out in this consultation. These will shape how the NDF is prepared.

If you have any queries on this consultation, please email: ndf@gov.wales or telephone 0300 025 3261.

National Development Framework: Issues, Options and Preferred Option		
Date: 23rd July 2018		
Name	Nicola Pearce	
Organisation	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	
Preferred contact details (Email address, phone number or address)	n.pearce@npt.gov.uk	
Type *(please select one from the following)*	Businesses	☐
	Local Planning Authority	X
	Government Agency/Other Public Sector	☐
	Professional Bodies/Interest Groups	☐
	Voluntary sector (community groups, volunteers, self-help groups, co-operatives, enterprises, religious, not for profit organisations)	☐
	Other groups not listed above	☐
	Responding in a private capacity	☐

Q1a	Do you have any comments on the findings of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) Interim Report?	X
	Yes	
	No	**X**
Comments		

Q1b	Do you have any comments on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Preliminary Screening Report?	X
	Yes	
	No	**X**
Comments		

Q2a	Do you agree the NDF Vision is clear and, ambitious, yet realistic?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	
	Disagree	**X**

Further comments

It is considered that the vision is neither sufficiently clear nor ambitious enough.

As currently drafted, the NDF vision mixes elements of a vision with the means by which this could be achieved. Whilst it would make a certain amount of sense to include linkages to the terminology of *draft* PPW Edition 10 in order to align the two documents, this has resulted in a vision which is written in confusing jargon and would be better presented in normal everyday language.

1st bullet point (*as written*) does not appear to make sense: *'…and our natural, historic and that cultural assets are protected, promoted and enhanced'*?

Critically, there are no spatial references in the vision that would make it distinctive to Wales – as written, the vision could be applied anywhere. Apart from a generic reference to regions in the 4th bullet point (*which appears more as an afterthought*), the vision lacks any reference to the distinctiveness of Wales' regions: e.g. Cardiff (as the capital city); Swansea (as a regionally important city for south-west Wales); the M4 corridor; the National Parks / special landscapes / rural communities etc.

The vision needs to showcase Wales and clearly set out the aspirations for what Wales will (*ideally*) be like by 2040.

Q2b	Do you believe any changes to the NDF Vision are required? If so, what are they?	X
	Yes	**X**
	No	

Comments

Primarily a distinctive spatial dimension should be incorporated (*refer to Q2a above*), with references to the direction of travel being set out in the NDF for the different parts of Wales.

The vision starts by stating that sustainable places are the goal of the planning system implying that this is an established fact whereas it is suggested that this is a new emphasis/approach that is being established by the NDF. For clarity therefore it is suggested that the vision should start: *'By 2040, Wales will be a country of sustainable places within distinctive regions…'* in order to clarify that placemaking *and* the regional approach are being established in order to deliver the vision of the NDF, then going on to explain briefly what 'sustainable places' and 'distinctive regions' are envisioned to mean and to be.

This could follow the proposed bullet point headings but in plain everyday language, focussing on what sustainable places will be like rather than the means that will be used to achieve this (which should come later).

The first part of the vision mentions healthy communities and well-being goals, but the bullet points refer only to *prosperous society* and *prosperous regions* (i.e. which most perceive to be measures of economic wealth/GDP?) with no mention of health and wellbeing aspirations. This does not appear to reflect fully the emphasis and intentions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Finally, the vision (and subsequent relevant objective), both refer to the transition to a *low-carbon* economy. Given the timescale of the NDF (i.e. 20 years) and the importance of climate change issues, this seems weak. The aspiration should at least be to have made substantial progress towards a zero-carbon economy by 2040.

Q3a	Do you agree with the NDF Objectives?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**X**
	Disagree	

Comments

Whilst there is broad agreement with the NDF objectives, it is considered that it would be helpful and logical if the objectives followed the format established in the vision and were grouped under the vision's bullet point headings rather than introducing a further different list of priorities.

Q3b	Do you consider any additional objectives are required? If so, what are they?	X
	Yes	
	No	**X**
Comments		

Q3c	Do you consider any of the NDF Objectives should be amended or removed?	X
	Yes	**X**
	No	
Comments		

Objective 1.1 – should be amended to refer to zero-carbon (*refer to Q2b above*).

Objective 1.3 – this appears to cover the same ground as Objective 1.1 (i.e. relates to ways of achieving 1.1)?

Objective 2.1 – the term *'green growth'* needs to be clarified.

Objective 2.2 – the nature of what *'national and foundation sectors'* are needs to be clarified.

Objective 2.4 – as written, this appears to relate to two separate objectives? Or should it read: *'Provide strategic direction for regeneration initiatives in order to tackle inequality'*?

Objective 3.1 – this appears to be a way of delivering objective(s) not an objective in itself. What is the objective of delivering city region/growth deals?

Objectives 9.1 & 11.1 – these appear to be much more precise and ambitious than the others, giving a specific target to be met. This results in an inconsistent approach.

General wording – the wording used is not consistent across the objectives, being a mixture of 'enable', 'support', 'ensure', 'strengthen' etc. While there may be reasons for this, objectives that only aspire to 'support' reductions of inequalities or pollution etc. seem weak (i.e. does it infer action or otherwise?). Objectives could also aspire to *substantial* change in their respective areas, given the timescale of the NDF.

It is suggested therefore that the wording of the objectives should be reviewed with the view to using a stronger form of wording where possible.

Q3d	Do you have any comments on the assessment of the NDF Objectives as set out in the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal interim report?	X
	Yes	**X**
	No	
Comments		
As a general observation, it is noted from the ISA objectives assessment that the support for city region deals and growth deals is not compatible with a number of ISA environmental and social objectives. Although the objective has been shortened, its effects have not changed and it remains part of the NDF.		

Q4a	Do you agree the NDF Options have been considered appropriately, in order to identify key strengths and weaknesses, and inform the Preferred Option?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**X**
	Disagree	
Comments		
In broad terms, the alternative options are considered to be appropriate. However, whilst the Preferred Option is presented as a hybrid option *'drawing together the key strengths from each option'*, it does not appear to bear any resemblance or relationship to the alternative options set out in Chapter 4. This calls into question whether the alternative options have been genuinely and properly considered and not just rejected in favour of an entirely new approach. It is also considered that the options are again not worded in a consistent way (e.g. focussing on / focussed on / to deliver) and mix together the measures to be taken and the anticipated outcomes of their implementation.		

Q4b	Do you have any comments on the assessment of the options as set out in the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal interim report and preliminary Habitats Regulations Assessment screening report?	X
	Yes	
	No	**X**
Comments		

Q4c	Are there further alternatives/options that should be considered for the strategic direction of the NDF?	X
	Yes	
	No	**X**
Comments		

Q5a	Do you agree with the NDF Preferred Option?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**X**
	Disagree	
Comments		

The Preferred Option has clearly been written to align with the placemaking objectives and thematic areas set out within the proposed new structure of Planning Policy Wales (PPW). Given that the NDF is the spatial expression of planning policy for Wales, it is agreed that it will be important to maintain a common structure and similar design between PPW and the NDF following the respective consultations.

In terms of its presentation, the Preferred Option is set out at much greater length and with a great deal more jargon and arguably confusion than the previous alternatives, with the individual policies mixing together high level policy, the justification for it, various examples about how it might work and the anticipated outcomes (should everything progress as expected).

It is suggested therefore that the Preferred Option should be expressed in a much shorter and more succinct way and its relationship to the alternatives clarified – i.e. where the *'primary focus is on placemaking within distinctive regions with references to delivering clean growth / decarbonisation, improvements in health and well-being, community cohesion and the Welsh language'*.

The themed presentation of the spatial issues and strategic policy direction would then set out how the preferred option would be delivered.

Whilst in broad terms the Preferred Option appears acceptable, it is difficult to fully understand the precise nature as many details are not yet presented or known. It is considered that throughout, the Preferred Option would benefit from clearer definitions and explanations of specific terms/phrases used. As examples, there is a need for clarity in what is meant by 'environmental risk' (DN2), 'national cultural development' (DN6), 'key national sectors' (PE5) etc.

Q5b	Do you have any comments on the assessment of the NDF Preferred Option as set out in the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal interim report and preliminary Habitats Regulations Assessment screening report?	X
	Yes	
	No	**X**
Comments		

Q5c	Do you agree all the NDF Objectives are adequately addressed in the NDF Preferred Option?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	
	Disagree	**X**
Comments		
In relation to natural resources – biodiversity assets, including habitats, species and designated sites are included in Objective 6.1, yet only designated sites and habitats are mentioned under the distinctive and natural places theme. Important species may partly be supported by site and habitat protection but there are species that this approach would not address their protection or aid in the recovery of their decline. It is suggested that the issues relating to protected and nationally declining species should be addressed through NDF policies where it relates to development.		

Q5d	Do you agree the NDF Preferred Option complements the NDF Vision and has the potential to help deliver it?	X
	Agree	**X**
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	
	Disagree	
Comments		
Although it is agreed that the Preferred Option complements the Vision, it is suggested that the Vision has been adjusted to fit the placemaking themes (*with reference to the regions added as an afterthought – refer to Q2a*).		

Q5e	Do you agree it is important for the NDF and Planning Policy Wales (PPW) to adopt similar and complementary structures, to help make clear links between the two documents?	X
	Agree	**X**
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	
	Disagree	

Comments

Given that the NDF is the spatial expression of planning policy for Wales, it is agreed that it will be important to maintain a common structure and similar design between PPW and the NDF.

Whilst the NDF approach to duplicate the themes set out the *Draft* PPW Edition 10 is therefore understood, it is suggested that this may ultimately lead to the distortion of the spatial messages set out within the NDF, preventing them being clearly made. The structure of *draft* PPW10 is certainly complex and convoluted and the duplication of this design is likely to over complicate matters in the NDF and lead to alienation of the general public and non-planners. A simpler and more straightforward approach should therefore be considered.

It is also suggested that the relationship between the two documents needs to be clarified and explained. Clearly the two documents need to be complementary and compatible but it is not currently clear whether there is intended to be a hierarchy – i.e. NDF, PPW, SDPs, LDPs/LDP Lites, or whether the NDF and PPW have an equal/equivalent joint position at the top of the hierarchy (along with the National Marine Plan)?

Does PPW set out the policies to implement the NDF or do they set out different aspects of Government planning policy at the national level? This should be clarified.

Q5f	The NDF Option is developed around 5 themes, reflecting the structure of PPW: Placemaking; Distinctive & Natural Places; Productive & Enterprising Places; Active & Social Places; Wales' Regions. Do you agree with this approach?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**X**
	Disagree	

Comments

The principle of a complementary and compatible approach is supported, but both the NDF and PPW need to be set out and written in a clear, simple and succinct way that can be understood by all and makes sense to everyone – *refer also to Q5e*.

Under ‘placemaking’, it is currently unclear how the 3 aspects have been chosen as the focus (i.e. P1 Decarbonisation & Climate Change; P2 Health & Well-being; P3 Cohesive Communities & Welsh Language).

In *draft* PPW10 the placemaking theme aims to ensure that all of the well-being goals and ways of working are appropriately considered not just a few aspects – it is therefore unclear why a different and narrower focus away from the more inclusive approach of the national placemaking outcomes has been taken in the NDF. Clarification should therefore be given in this respect.

Q5g	Do you agree with the Spatial Issues and Strategic Policy Direction outlined within the NDF Preferred Option?	**X**
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**X**
	Disagree	

Comments

In broad terms, it is considered that the spatial issues are not generally expressed in terms of being issues. For example, the DN spatial issues all appear to relate to the identification of areas of resources and/or environmental quality. Presumably for these, the spatial *issues* should be *‘the need to address areas of environmental risk’* or *‘the need to preserve/enhance areas of national importance’* etc.

It is suggested therefore that this is a source of confusion about what the terminology (and therefore the whole Preferred Option) actually means. Spatial issues are presumably *issues* that have a *spatial* dimension and should be described as such.

Many of the spatial issues are also listed as *‘All Wales’*, without any indication of what the issue is. For example, the spatial issue for PE2 would presumably be about the need to deliver local energy generation in certain areas in order to meet the energy generation aspirations of the Welsh Government?

Throughout there are numerous references to the fact that *‘nationally important’* areas will be identified, including those relating to ecosystems; green infrastructure; energy generation, storage and distribution infrastructure; employment; minerals; waste; economy growth sectors; regeneration areas; transportation; active travel infrastructure.

Whilst this approach is broadly supported, there needs to be clarity/transparency on the methods / identification criteria to be used and ongoing engagement / consultation between the Welsh Government and Local Planning Authorities will be important in this respect.

In specific respect of nationally important habitats, ecosystems and green infrastructure (i.e. DN3, DN4 and DN5), it is unclear what mechanism there will be in the NDF that will address the issues and policy direction mentioned; particularly in relation to expansion, connectivity and improvement of resilience as a great deal will be reliant on measures that may not necessarily fit with the remit of the current planning process.

Spatial allocations may be appropriate but the delivery of actual functioning corridors, for example, may be reliant upon other mechanisms and as such important linkages to such other mechanisms to ensure delivery should be identified during the development of the policies. Designated sites have already been identified in Appendix A (F) but no detail is available in relation to habitats, ecosystems and green infrastructure.

In general terms the strategic policy direction for the various spatial issues appears to be reasonable, although again there is inconsistency with some topics being much more precisely defined, with specific targets to be met, which does not seem appropriate for such a high level document.

Finally, whilst there is support for the NDF to provide strategic direction for the proposed regions across Wales, caution should be applied when identifying levels of growth / housing numbers. Whilst it would be expected that the NDF include national projections and an all-Wales range of housing numbers for the Plan period, it is questionable whether it would be appropriate for the NDF to provide regional ranges/targets for housing delivery. It is argued that this would be too prescriptive and should more appropriately be undertaken at the regional level.

Q5h	Do you agree the NDF Preferred Option offers a basis for the co-ordinated delivery of Welsh Government priorities outlined in *Prosperity for All: the national strategy*?	**X**
	Agree	**X**
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	
	Disagree	

Comments

Generally agree – the identification of key growth areas, the type and location of infrastructure needed, the coordination of the delivery of housing, employment and connectivity infrastructure, would offer a basis for coordinating the delivery of the cross-cutting priority areas identified in *'Prosperity for All'*.

It is suggested however that the relationship between the two documents and how the NDF contributes to the delivery of the 5 cross-cutting priority areas needs to be better explained. For example, whilst the contribution the NDF can make towards coordinating the delivery of housing is obvious, the contribution towards delivering the other priorities (e.g. early years, social care, mental health etc.) is less so – this should be clarified.

Q5i	Do you agree the NDF Preferred Option could be formulated or changed so as to have increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	X
	Disagree	
Comments		
The Preferred Option (P3) identifies that the NDF will *'…support communities by enabling appropriate employment opportunities and planning the provision of new homes so that population change is carefully managed'*. Whilst it is unclear as to the level of development being referred to, it should be recognised that the use of the language is often strongest in the more rural parts of Wales. Such locations are quite often not well served by services and/or facilities and consequently are not the most sustainable locations to promote development. Furthermore, within the Welsh speaking valley communities, viability is also an issue that often inhibits development.		

Q6a	Do you agree with the proposed changes to the Statement of Public Participation?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	X
	Disagree	
Comments		
No comment.		

Q6b	Are there any other changes we should make to the Statement of Public Participation?	X
	Agree	
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	X
	Disagree	
Comments		
No comment.		

How to respond

Please submit your comments by **23 July 2018**, in any of the following ways:

Email	**Post**
Please complete the consultation form and send it to: ndf@gov.wales [Please include **Preferred Option consultation** in the subject line]	Please complete the consultation form and send it to: National Development Framework Team Planning Policy Branch Planning Directorate Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Additional information
If you have any queries about this consultation, please: Email: ndf@gov.wales Telephone: 0300 025 3261