

Bridgend Local Development Plan

2006-2021



Background Paper 9: Employment Land Supply

May 2012

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Background Paper is the ninth in a series of documents which has been prepared by Bridgend County Borough Council to provide information and justification to the contents of the deposit Bridgend Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.2 This particular paper relates to the employment land supply as defined by Policies SP9, REG1 and Appendix 3 of the deposit LDP.
- 1.3 In reaching the amount of land allocated for employment purposes in the deposit LDP the Council has taken into account the following factors.

2. LDP Vision, Strategy and Objectives

- 2.1 The LDP Vision seeks to transform the County Borough into a sustainable network of communities that offer opportunities and an improved quality of life for all people living and working in the area.
- 2.2 The following LDP objectives are also relevant:

Objective 1a seeks to promote Bridgend as the key principal settlement of the County Borough where major employment, commercial and residential development is focused.

Objective 3a seeks to build a more diverse, dynamic and self reliant economy and business environment.

Objective 3b seeks to provide a realistic level and variety of employment land to facilitate the delivery of high quality workspaces and job opportunities.

Objectives 3c seeks to bring the benefits of regeneration to the valley communities by directing new development to those areas at a scale which acknowledges their geographical constraints and infrastructure capacity.

Objective 3e seeks to enable Bridgend Town to become an attractive and successful regional retail and commercial destination which meets the needs of its catchment.

Objective 4a seeks to provide a land use framework that recognises the needs of deprived areas within the County Borough, which affords those communities the opportunities to tackle the sources of their deprivation.

Council's Emphasis

- 2.3 The Regeneration-Led Spatial Strategy which the Council is pursuing is defined in paragraph 2.3.3 of the LDP as: *"an overarching and balanced process that delivers investment and opportunity to areas and communities within the County Borough of previous or current decline, to improve their physical, economic and social fabric"*.

2.4 The deposit LDP goes on to state:

The Regeneration-Led Spatial Strategy puts in place a policy framework that can best deliver the regeneration needs of the County Borough in order for it to prosper and fully realise its potential.

The LDP Strategy has been developed to provide a land use framework, which will help realise the regeneration aspirations and priorities of the Council, and will make the most meaningful contribution with respect to securing social, environmental and economic benefits for the communities of the County Borough.

In recognition of the regeneration needs and priorities of the County Borough, the Council already has in place and is developing a range of site-specific and area based Strategies, Programmes and initiatives. One of the main functions of the LDP Regeneration-Led Strategy is to help deliver these identified priorities and needs, where they have land-use implications and requirements.

2.5 With this in mind, it is clear that, in the provision of economic development opportunity generally, and the provision of land for employment purposes specifically, it is not an objective of the LDP to constrain economic activity in the County Borough by intrinsically linking the provision of land to housing / population growth. Indeed, in choosing its preferred spatial options, the Council proactively chose the regeneration led strategy over either the economic or population led spatial strategies. This will help to address some of the significant economic and social deprivation issues which are prevalent in the County Borough and highlighted in the Council's Background Paper 1 and key issues identified in the LDP (section 1.6 refers).

2.6 The LDP Pre-Deposit Proposals document concludes: "*The Regeneration Led Spatial Strategy performs the best when assessed against the 22 strategic objectives. It is considered that the Regeneration Led Spatial Strategy would best achieve the LDP Vision, the strategic objectives of the LDP, and is a better overall fit with national and regional policies. This Spatial Strategy would help realise the regeneration priorities of the Council, and would make the most meaningful contribution with respect to securing social, environmental and economic benefits within the County Borough.*"

2.7 Opportunity needs to be given across the County Borough on a range of sites giving choice to both potential investors in to the County Borough and to enable local businesses to establish themselves or expand their existing enterprises.

3. Planning Policy Wales

3.1 Planning Policy Wales is supportive of this approach:

All communities need new employment opportunities (7.1.6)

Local planning authorities should ensure that:

- *sufficient land suitable for development for enterprise and employment uses and well served by infrastructure is designated for employment so as to meet both identified and as yet unidentified needs; and that*
- *new development for enterprise and employment uses is located and implemented in accordance with sustainability principles. (7.1.7)*

The planning system should be efficient, effective and simple and local planning authorities should ensure that their planning processes are transparent. This will provide greater certainty and clarity for business development. (7.1.8)

Land use planning policies for economic development will be neither effective nor sustainable unless they are realistic about resource availability and provide developers and others with scope to make choices to secure the efficient and effective use of those resources.

The development plan should: Identify a range and choice of sites to meet different economic and employment needs, having regard to where the private sector want to invest, and which meet, or have the potential to meet, the Assembly Government's objectives for transport and other relevant policy fields;

Council's Emphasis

3.2 Planning Policy Wales therefore advocates that local planning authorities:

- should seek to provide employment opportunities in all areas;
- should allocate land to meet identified need whilst also protecting land for as yet unidentified need;
- provide efficient, effective and simple policies to provide clarity and certainty;
- identify a range and choice of sites to meet different needs having regard to where the private sector wishes to invest (whilst providing developers with choices in this regard) and which meet the Welsh Governments policy objectives.

3.3 In order to inform the eventual allocations in the deposit LDP which both supported the strategy of the plan and provided sufficient land for development in the County Borough, an employment land review was carried out in 2010¹.

4. Bridgend Employment Land Review 2010

4.1 The Council undertook a review of employment land in 2010 using the *Employment Land Review: Guidance Notes* which was published by the then Office for the Deputy Prime Minister in 2004². No equivalent guidance is available in Wales at the present time, although Planning Policy Wales identifies this document as a potential good practice guide.

4.2 Planning Policy Wales states:

In designating land for employment needs, local planning authorities should address such issues as the phasing of development and the availability of

¹ <http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/web/groups/public/documents/report/083918.pdf>

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147540.pdf>

infrastructure against an agreed identified 'requirement'. Some local planning authorities have allocations of land for employment and other uses which cannot realistically be taken up in the quantities envisaged over the lifetime of the development plan. Local planning authorities should therefore review all their non-housing allocations when preparing or reviewing their development plans and consider whether some of this land might be better used for housing or mixed use developments or no longer be designated for development. (Paragraph 7.2.1 refers)

- 4.3 The Council, in agreeing with the above advice, embarked upon this review process in order to arrive at an employment land bank which was realistic, deliverable, capable of meeting identified (and unidentified) need and which met the Planning Policy Wales and Bridgend LDP Strategy objectives of providing economic opportunities.
- 4.4 The process, results and conclusions of the Employment Land Review are contained within the document. However, the Council believes that the review and the resultant LDP allocations follow a 'common sense' and logical approach that addresses the underlying issues and objectives of the LDP. These should be viewed in the contribution the sites make individually to their collective areas and not be seen as wholly undeliverable due to the sum of their collective parts when related back to the identified 'need' contained within the Employment Land Review.
- 4.5 The results of the review and the resultant areas of land allocated for employment purposes in the LDP fall in to one of three categories:
1. The retention of existing and well established employment / industrial estate areas which contain only 'pockets' of vacant land.
 2. Allocated new employment land in areas of identified growth; 'the SRGAs'
 3. Allocated 'Strategic Employment Sites' which benefit the whole of the County Borough.
- 4.6 The sites which contribute towards the overall LDP employment land supply as defined under each of the above 3 categories, are outlined below (with figures from the 2009 Vacant Employment Land Survey) . The specific reasons for their individual inclusion are given in the Employment Land Review report.

1. The retention of existing, established employment / industrial estate areas which contain 'pockets' of vacant land.

LDP Policy	Site Name	Total Area Remaining (Ha)
REG1(4)	Coychurch Yard Bridgend	0.3
REG1(5)	Crosby Yard Bridgend	0.85
REG1(6)	Litchard Industrial Estate	0.46
REG1(10)	Waterton Industrial Estate	11.29
REG1(14)	Heol Ty Gwyn Maesteg	3.14

REG1(18)	Abergarw Industrial Estate	2.99
REG1(20)	Brynmenyn Industrial Estate	7.41
REG1(25)	Bocam Park, Pencoed	1.16
REG1(26)	Bridgend Science Park	1
REG1(29)	Ffaldau Industrial Estate	0.07
REG1(30)	Georgia Pacific	2.1
REG1(32)	Isfryn Industrial Estate	0.9
REG1(34)	Penllwyngwent Ogmores Vale	4.23
REG1(36)	Village Farm Industrial Estate Pyle	5.15
TOTAL		41.05

2. Allocated new employment land in areas of identified growth; ‘the SRGAs’

4.7 These include existing employment sites which have been reassessed and now form part of mixed use regeneration areas.

LDP Policy	Site Name	Total Area Remaining (Ha)
REG1(1)	Brackla Industrial Estate	14
REG1(7)	Parc Afon Ewenni	8
REG1(6)	Coegnant Caerau	2
REG1(12)	Ewenny Road Maesteg	3.5
REG1(21)	Christie Tyler Site	2
REG1(23)	Land at west of Maesteg Road, Tondu	2
REG1(24)	Land adjacent to Sarn Park Services	3.8
REG1(17)	Pwll y Waun	0.7
TOTAL		36

3. Allocated Strategic Employment Sites which benefit the whole of the County Borough.

LDP Policy	Site Name	Total Area Remaining (Ha)
SP10(1)	Brocastle Waterton	46.1
SP10(2)	Island Farm Bridgend	11
SP10(3)	Pencoed Technology Park	5.4
SP10(4)	Ty Draw Farm, Pyle	6.04
TOTAL		68.54

4.8 In acknowledging the comments in Planning Policy Wales, this review process was successful in reducing the employment land bank from approximately 210 hectares in 2009 to the 164 hectares identified in the plan, 45% of which is located on the Strategic Employment Sites (30% of the total is accounted for at Brocastle, Waterton site).

- 4.9 In viewing the above categories and the contribution from each, it is clear that the land in categories 1 and 2 would be sufficient to cover the identified 'trend-based' need for employment land identified in the Employment Land Review.
- 4.10 However, the development of the Council's Strategic Employment Sites (the rationale for allocation of which is given in paragraphs 2.3.81 – 2.3.94 of the LDP) are instrumental to the delivery of the LDP Strategy and represent the single largest development plots for employment land in the County Borough. These parcels of land have the potential to make the greatest contribution to employment provision in the area when developed and are potentially the most attractive to the market to encourage potential inward investment.
- 4.11 Notwithstanding this, there is also a certain level of risk to the delivery of these sites, which has been made all the more so by the recent economic climate. However, the Council wishes to retain these sites for future, strategic provision and will endeavour to continue to work to bring these sites forward through the planning system in partnership with the Council's Economic Development Unit and the landowners of the site (especially the Welsh Government who own 3 of the 4 sites) as much as possible during the plan period.
- 4.12 Should the delivery of these sites be unachievable in that time, the Council is confident that it has allocated sufficient land across the County Borough to meet the employment needs over the Plan period whilst meeting the objectives of the Plan. This is demonstrated by Table 3.1 of the LDP (see below) which displays the relative distribution of housing and employment land in the Plan and is explained in more detail in paragraphs 3.1.6 – 3.1.14 of the LDP.

SRGA	Housing Units on Allocations (2009)	% of Housing Allocations	Vacant Employment Land (Ha) (2009)	% of Vacant Employment Land
Bridgend	3034	41	40.93	49
Maesteg / Llynfi Valley	501	7	8.64	10
Porthcawl	1506	20	0.7	1
Valleys Gateway	1194	16	18.2	22
Outside SRGAs	1203	16	15.49	18
TOTAL	7438	100	83.96	100
Strategic Employment Sites			68.54	

5. Simplicity and Flexibility

- 5.1 In terms of having a flexible and simple approach to economic development land use policies, the Council has not sought to rigidly apply land use class constraints on individual sites and identifies the majority of its employment land allocated in the LDP by Policy REG1 for B1, B2 and B8 uses. The only exceptions to this are sites that are located within the residential urban fabric

where B2 and B8 uses are considered not to be acceptable due to amenity issues.

- 5.2 In addition, Policy REG2 allows certain complimentary and ancillary uses on these sites. Policy REG3 also permits, subject to the fulfilment of certain criteria, suitable D2 uses on sites allocated in REG1. It is the intention of the Local Planning Authority to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance on this issue in due course.
- 5.3 The Strategic Employment Sites are also allocated for B1, B2 and B8 uses by Policy SP9. However, within this, preferred uses are identified which align the policy with the priority sectors contained within the Welsh Government's *Economic Renewal: A New Direction* (2010) document.
- 5.4 Flexibility is also inherent in the fact that many of the sites identified in Category 2 above are designated as part of mixed use developments identified by Policy PLA3 of the LDP. In this respect, subject to the emergence of additional evidence and viability information with respect of future implementation and deliverability, the balance of land uses within the PLA3 site allocations could change.

6. Employment Land and Waste Facilities

- 6.1 Policy SP7 of the plan identifies 5 sites where new waste management facilities will be favoured. Whilst most of the sites listed lie within existing industrial estates, Land at Heol y Splott SP7(1) is specifically designated for waste management purposes and is not part of the general employment land supply. Paragraph 4.5.5 of the LDP states that the Heol Y Splott site is the most suitable site due to its location.
- 6.2 Whilst specific sites are not allocated within the industrial estates listed in SP7(2-5) it is considered that the vacant parcels of land or buildings within these areas subject to satisfying other policies in the plan including areas not in a flood zone, will be suitable for small-medium scale waste management facilities.
- 6.3 It is considered that as these waste management facilities would additionally be employment generators and often represent sui-generis uses suitably located on industrial estates, their development would contribute to the employment land development figure and so would not materially dilute the availability of land for other employment purposes.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 In conclusion, the Council acknowledges that the amount of land allocated for employment purposes in the LDP exceeds the need identified in the Employment Land Review.
- 7.2 However, it also recognises that Planning Policy Wales advocates a positive, flexible approach to employment land provision which provides a simple policy framework for private sector enterprise to operate within, giving a range and

choice of sites across the County Borough which additionally assists the Council in implementing the regeneration-led spatial strategy of the LDP.

- 7.3 The amount of employment land allocated will not frustrate the population and housing growth aspirations of the Plan. Indeed it has been demonstrated that employment land provision has been aligned, as practically possible to the strategic spatial distribution of this growth. However, the Council considers that, in the context of a regeneration-led strategy, employment land provision should not be tied to, and limited by, population growth, but should reflect the economic regeneration objectives of the plan; helping to assist the Council and its partners in tackling some of the existing economic deprivation which currently exists in the County Borough in a positive, flexible manner.