

4.1 Sustainable Development

4.1.1 The goal of sustainable development is to “enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.”¹

4.2.4 A plan-led approach is the most effective way to secure sustainable development through the planning system and it is important that plans are adopted and kept regularly under review (see Chapter 2). Legislation secures a presumption in favour of development in accordance with the development plan for the area unless material considerations indicate otherwise (see 3.1.2). Where:

there is no adopted development *plan* or relevant development plan *policies* are considered outdated or superseded or where there are no relevant *policies*

4.3 The Sustainable Development Principle

4.3.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act establishes a ‘sustainable development principle’ which means that a defined public body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In order to achieve this principle we expect all those involved in the planning system to adhere to:

putting people, and their quality of life now and in the future, at the centre of decision-making;

engagement and involvement, ensuring that everyone has the chance to obtain information, see how decisions are made and take part in decision-making;

taking a **long term** perspective to safeguard the interests of future generations, whilst at the same time meeting needs of people today;

respect for **environmental limits**, so that resources are not irrecoverably depleted or the environment irreversibly damaged. This means, for example, mitigating climate change, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, minimising harmful emissions, and promoting sustainable use of natural resources;

tackling **climate change** by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and ensuring that places are resilient to the consequences of climate change;

applying the **precautionary principle**. Cost-effective measures to prevent possibly serious environmental damage should not be postponed just because of scientific uncertainty about how serious the risk is;

using **scientific knowledge to aid decision-making**, and trying to work out in advance what knowledge will be needed so that appropriate research can be undertaken;

while preventing pollution as far as possible, ensuring that the **polluter pays** for damage resulting from pollution. In general the Welsh Government will seek to ensure that costs are met by those whose actions incur them;

applying the **proximity principle**, especially in managing waste and pollution. This means solving problems locally rather than passing them on to other places or to future generations;

taking account of the full range of **costs and benefits** over the lifetime of a development, including those which cannot be easily valued in money terms when making plans and decisions and taking account of timing, risks and uncertainties. This also includes recognition of the climate a development is likely to experience over its intended lifetime; and

working in **collaboration** with others to ensure that information and knowledge is shared to deliver outcomes with wider benefits.

4.3.2 Further advice on acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle and guidance on the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act will be published by the Welsh Government.

4.4 Objectives

4.4.1 The following sustainability objectives for the planning system reflect our vision for sustainable development and the outcomes we seek to deliver across Wales. These objectives should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans and in taking decisions on individual planning applications in Wales. These reflect the sustainable development outcomes that we see the planning system facilitating across Wales.

4.4.2 Detailed application of some of these objectives is explored in later sections of this chapter. Chapters 5 to 14 consider in more detail the responsibilities and scope for action of local planning authorities in these policy fields and provide guidance as to how they can be met. Technical Advice Notes providing additional guidance are signposted in these chapters where relevant. The following points include in brackets an indication of where in this document further guidance is set out.

4.4.3 In contributing to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, planning policies, decisions and proposals should:

A Prosperous Wales

Promote resource-efficient and climate change resilient settlement patterns that minimise land-take (and especially extensions to the area of impermeable surfaces) and urban sprawl, especially through preference for the re-use of suitable previously developed land and buildings, wherever possible avoiding development on greenfield sites (Sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9).

Play an appropriate role to facilitate sustainable building standards (including zero carbon) that seek to minimise the sustainability and environmental impacts of buildings (Section 4.12).

Play an appropriate role in securing the provision of infrastructure to form the physical basis for sustainable communities (including water supplies, sewerage and associated waste water treatment facilities, waste management facilities, energy supplies and distribution networks and telecommunications), while ensuring proper assessment of their sustainability impacts (Chapter 12).

Maximise the use of renewable resources, including sustainable materials (recycled and renewable materials and those with a lower embodied energy). Where it is judged necessary to use non-renewable resources they should be used as efficiently as possible. The use of renewable resources and of sustainably produced materials from local sources should be encouraged and recycling and re-use levels arising from demolition and construction maximised and waste minimised (4.11.5 and 4.11.10).

Encourage opportunities to reduce waste and all forms of pollution and promote good environmental management and best environmental practice (4.11.5, Chapters 12 and 13). Waste arising from demolition and construction should be minimised, and opportunities to recycle and re-use this waste promoted (4.11.5).

Support initiative and innovation and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on enterprises (especially small and medium sized firms) so as to enhance the economic success of both urban and rural areas, helping businesses to maximise their competitiveness (Chapter 7).

Promote a low carbon economy and social enterprises (Section 7.4).

Facilitate the provision of minerals to meet the needs of society both now and in the future whilst protecting and improving the amenity of communities and the natural and built environment, together with promoting efficient use, recycling, waste prevention and the use of appropriate alternative materials (Chapter 14).

A Resilient Wales

Contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment, so as to improve the quality of life, and protect local and global ecosystems. In particular, planning should seek to ensure that development does not produce irreversible harmful effects on the natural environment and support

measures that allow the natural heritage to adapt to the effects of climate change. The conservation and enhancement of statutorily designated areas and of the countryside and undeveloped coast; the conservation of biodiversity, habitats, and landscapes; the conservation of the best and most versatile agricultural land; and enhancement of the urban environment all need to be promoted (4.10, 4.11.10, Chapters 5 and 13).

Minimise the risks posed by, or to, development on or adjacent to unstable or contaminated land and land liable to flooding. This includes managing and seeking to mitigate the consequences of climate change (see 4.5.4 and 4.5.5) by building resilience into the natural and built environment (Chapters 5, 12 and 13).

A Healthier Wales

Contribute to the protection and, where possible, the improvement of people's health and well-being as a core component of achieving the well-being goals and responding to climate change. Consideration of the possible impacts of developments – positive and/or negative – on people's health at an early stage will help to clarify the relevance of health and the extent to which it needs to be taken into account (Sections 4.7, 8.1, 11.1 and Chapter 12).

A More Equal Wales

Promote access to employment, shopping, education, health, community, leisure and sports facilities and open and green space, maximising opportunities for community development and social welfare (Sections 4.6, 4.7 and 8.1, Chapters 7, 10 and 11).

Promote quality, lasting, environmentally-sound and flexible employment opportunities (Chapter 7).

Respect and encourage diversity in the local economy (Section 4.6 and Chapter 7).

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

Locate developments so as to minimise the demand for travel, especially by private car (Section 4.7 and Chapter 8).

Ensure that all local communities – both urban and rural – have sufficient good quality housing for their needs, including affordable housing for local needs and for special needs where appropriate, in safe neighbourhoods (4.11.12 and Chapter 9).

Foster improvements to transport facilities and services which maintain or improve accessibility to services and facilities, secure employment, economic and environmental objectives, and improve safety and amenity. In general, developments likely to support the achievement of an integrated transport system should be encouraged (Section 4.7 and Chapter 8).

Foster social inclusion by ensuring that full advantage is taken of the opportunities to secure a more accessible environment for everyone that the development of land and buildings provides. This includes helping to ensure that development is accessible by means other than the private car (Section 4.7 and 4.11.11).

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

Help to ensure the conservation of the historic environment and cultural heritage, acknowledging and fostering local diversity (4.11.10 and Chapter 6).

Contribute positively to the well-being of the Welsh language and ensure any negative impacts on the use of the language are mitigated (4.13).

A Globally Responsible Wales

Support the need to tackle the causes of climate change by moving towards a low carbon economy. This includes facilitating development that reduces emissions of greenhouse gases in a

sustainable manner, provides for renewable and low carbon energy sources at all scales and facilitates low and zero carbon developments (Sections 4.7, 4.11 and Chapter 12).

4.5.7 Planning to minimise the causes of climate change means taking decisive action to move towards a low carbon economy (see Section 12.8) by proactively reducing the demand for energy (see Chapter 8 and Section 12.8), facilitating the delivery of new and more sustainable forms of energy provision at all scales (see Section 12.8) and minimising the emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

4.6.4 The countryside is a dynamic and multi-purpose resource. In line with sustainability principles, it must be conserved and, where possible, enhanced for the sake of its ecological, geological, physiographic, historical, archaeological and agricultural value and for its landscape and natural resources, balancing the need to conserve these attributes against the economic, social and recreational needs of local communities and visitors. Central to this is ensuring that the countryside is resilient to the impacts of climate change and plays a role in reducing the causes of climate change through the protection of carbon sinks and as a sustainable energy source.

12.8.6 The Welsh Government's aim is to secure an appropriate mix of energy provision for Wales which maximises benefits to our economy and communities, whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts. This forms part of the Welsh Government's aim to secure the strongest economic development policies to underpin growth and prosperity in Wales recognising the importance of clean energy and the efficient use of natural resources, both as an economic driver and a commitment to sustainable development.

12.8.8 The Welsh Government is committed to using the planning system to:

- optimise renewable energy generation;
- optimise low carbon energy generation;
- facilitate combined heat and power systems (and combined cooling, heat and power) where feasible;

and
recognise that the benefits of renewable energy are part of the overall commitment to tackle climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as increasing energy security.

12.8.9 Local planning authorities should facilitate the development of all forms of renewable and low carbon energy to move towards a low carbon economy (see 4.4.3) to help to tackle the causes of climate change (see 4.7.3). Specifically, they should make positive provision by:

- considering the contribution that their area can make towards developing and facilitating renewable and low carbon energy, and ensuring that development plan policies enable this contribution to be delivered;
- ensuring that development management decisions are consistent with national and international climate change obligations, including contributions to renewable energy targets and aspirations;
- recognising the environmental, economic and social opportunities that the use of renewable energy resources can make to planning for sustainability (see Chapter 4); and
- ensuring that all new publicly financed or supported buildings set exemplary standards for energy conservation and renewable energy production.

12.8.10 At the same time, local planning authorities should:

ensure that international and national statutory obligations to protect designated areas, species and habitats and the historic environment are observed;

ensure that mitigation measures are required for potential detrimental effects on local communities whilst ensuring that the potential impact on economic viability is given full consideration; and encourage the optimisation of renewable and low carbon energy in new development to facilitate the move towards zero carbon buildings (see 4.11 and 4.12).

12.8.12 In the short to medium term, wind energy continues to offer the greatest potential (for activities within the control of the planning system in Wales) for delivering renewable energy. Wales has an abundant wind resource and power generation using this resource remains the most commercially viable form of renewable energy. The Welsh Government accepts that the introduction of new, often very large structures for onshore wind needs careful consideration to avoid and where possible minimise their impact. However, the need for wind energy is a key part of meeting the Welsh Government's vision for future renewable electricity production as set out in the Energy Policy Statement (2010) and should be taken into account by decisions makers when determining such applications.