

Carl Sargeant AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio  
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-493  
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/01266/13

William Powell AM  
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Chair Petitions committee  
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26 July 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter dated 10 July seeking my views on a petition submitted by a councillor from north west Cardiff, to introduce a moratorium on Local Development Plans (LDPs) in those areas recommended for inclusion in city regions (P-04-493). I have concerns about the petition and consider it an inappropriate course of action to follow. My reasons, relating to the benefit of progressing up to date LDP coverage across Wales to provide certainty for infrastructure providers and communities, are set out more fully below.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all local planning authorities across Wales to prepare a LDP. To date there are currently 9 adopted LDPs out of 24 being prepared (37.5%) with a further 4 anticipated to be adopted later this year (subject to examination Inspectors' recommendations), taking the total to over 50% coverage.

Having an up-to-date adopted development plan in place is essential to provide certainty for both local communities, infrastructure providers and others, ensuring there is sufficient land in sustainable locations to meet the needs of society over the next 10 to 15 years. Enabling jobs, infrastructure, homes and all the other facilities required to provide high quality lifestyles to come forward is vital for our communities. Investors require confidence that Wales is open for business; a pre-requisite being an adopted LDP which enables developers to access finance and implement proposals. Having an adopted LDP provides this reassurance and financial confidence.

In parallel, it is also essential for local communities to be part of the process shaping their future environments, engaging in plan preparation. Plans not only provide certainty for investors but clarity for communities, with consideration of their needs and aspirations.

To provide a practical example of why the petition does not offer an appropriate way forward I wish to cite Cardiff. Cardiff's Deposit LDP is programmed to be agreed by the Council and

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subject to statutory consultation in October/November this year (an informal copy of this plan is currently available on the Council's website). The Council currently does not have a 5 year housing land supply, as required by national policy – 'Planning Policy Wales' (PPW), nor an up-to-date development plan. This has left the Council in a vulnerable position regarding ad hoc planning applications coming forward which would be likely to be approved at appeal. This is currently happening, with the Council also incurring financial penalties as the applicants' seek to recover their costs.

Similarly, in the greater Swansea area, work is progressing on the Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea LDPs. I do not want this work to stop.

While we can always find reasons for avoiding or postponing difficult decisions, including in plan making, it is worth noting that one of the Independent Advisory Group's conclusions was that LDPs are essential to identify the land needed to meet society's needs for amongst other things, houses and jobs and that they are key to delivering sustainable development objectives. The consequence of delaying LDPs would be to essentially say that Wales is closed for business. Infrastructure providers and others would not be able to access finance to bring forward development, market confidence and the creation of new jobs would fall, and housing affordability would worsen due to supply not matching demand; there would be planning by appeal, with land lost to inappropriate development in potentially less sustainable locations. Conversely, development could grind to a halt to the detriment of Wales. If Wales is to recover and compete on a global scale we cannot allow this to happen.

A further reason for progressing LDPs relates to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), introduced by the UK Government on an England and Wales basis, which effectively replaces Section 106 planning obligations when considering financing wider infrastructure. The CIL is based on having an adopted up-to-date development plan in place, a LDP. With a delay in bringing forward LDPs, there would be an inability to utilise the CIL to finance infrastructure which could have severe consequences for local communities and business. I wish to avoid limiting local planning authorities' access to such finance.

The petition submitted by Councillor McEvoy refers to 'Save our Capital Cardiff', a group formed to object to the scale and location of growth currently being proposed through Cardiff Council's emerging LDP. I wish to point out that the preparation of a LDP is a statutory process with formal consultation periods and a public examination led by an independently appointed Inspector. All objectors who make their views known through the statutory deposit consultation period have a right to be heard in person at the examination. Therefore, if anybody holds views regarding the scale and location of growth as being inappropriate, such as the Save our Capital Group, there is a statutory process already in place to address such concerns.

I am pleased that Cardiff's new administration is determined to progress a plan and anticipates adopting its LDP in October 2015. Having an adopted plan should enable the Council to steer and influence change and to maximise financial receipts through a CIL charge to support infrastructure, giving certainty and confidence to infrastructure providers and local communities.

An LDP for Cardiff does not prejudge the outcome of strategic planning; it ensures that the Council has a plan in place to address current issues. It ensures that all current statutory duties are adhered to and more importantly, provides certainty and clarity as expediently as possible.

In conclusion, I believe that it is imperative that LDPs are progressed as rapidly as possible to ensure Wales is best placed to compete globally and maximise the benefits to the people and businesses of Wales.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl Sargeant". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the "Yours Sincerely" text.

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