

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref SF/HL/6304/11

Nick Ramsey AM
Enterprise and Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

17 October 2011

Dear Nick

ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE – TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Please see below my response to the additional information requested by the Committee.

1. How many local authorities in Wales have a Local Development Plan that is up to date? Which local authorities are they?

5 local authorities have adopted Local Development Plans. A further 13 local planning authorities have an up- to-date Unitary Development Plan. Details of plan coverage are as follows:

Adopted Local Development Plans (LDP's)	
Local Planning Authority	Date Adopted
Caerphilly	December 2010
Merthyr Tydfil	May 2011
Pembrokeshire National Park	September 2010
Rhondda Cynon Taff	March 2011
Snowdonia National Park	July 2011

Adopted Unitary Development Plans (UDP's)	
Local Planning Authority	Date Adopted
Blaenau Gwent	July 2006
Bridgend	May 2005
Carmarthenshire	July 2006
Denbighshire	July 2002
Gwynedd	July 2009

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Monmouthshire	June 2006
Neath Port Talbot	March 2008
Newport	May 2006
Pembrokeshire & Pembrokeshire National Park	July 2006 (Joint UDP)
Powys	March 2010
Swansea	November 2008
Vale of Glamorgan	April 2005
Wrexham	February 2005

No UDP / LDP Coverage <i>(Structure Plan Coverage exists for the below LPA's)</i>	
Brecon Beacons National Park	Local Plan 1999
Cardiff	Local Plan 1996
Ceredigion	No Plan
Conwy	No Plan (for part of LPA area) Local Plan Colwyn 1999 Local Plan Llandudno & Conwy 1982
Flintshire	Delyn Local Plan 1983 / Alyn & Deeside Local Plan 2003
Isle of Anglesey	Local Plan 1996
Torfaen	Local Plan 2000

2. Which Local Development Plans address town centre regeneration issues?

Local planning authorities must devise an up-to-date and appropriate evidence base as part of the process of making a Local Development Plan. Most of the authorities who are making progress with their Local Development Plans have undertaken some form of retail assessment. In particular, the following local planning authorities have undertaken specific assessments of town centre or retailing issues as part of their evidence base for their development plans:

Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Isle of Anglesey, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham, Brecon Beacons National Park, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Snowdonia National Park.

Where the evidence base identifies a need for retail-led regeneration policies these should be included in the Local Development Plan.

A comprehensive list of the studies undertaken is included as an appendix to this letter.

3. Has the Welsh Government commissioned research on the impact of out-of-town retail developments on town centres?

The Welsh Government has not undertaken any specific assessment of these impacts, however, impacts are considered as part of the planning process. As noted above, a number of local planning authorities have already undertaken retail assessments which will include an assessment at a local level.

In addition, local planning authorities should consider the likely impact of a proposed out-of-town retail development by requiring a Retail Impact Assessment to accompany a planning application. Whilst it is noted that it is the applicant who will provide this assessment, and may use it to support their application, the local planning authority should

assess the impacts within the context of the national policy framework which advocates a town centre first approach, by application of a sequential test.

4. What view does the Welsh Government take on whether out-of-town or edge of town retail developments can benefit town centres?

Our planning policy clearly advocates that local planning authorities should adopt a sequential test when considering major retail proposals. In essence, this means that applicants should first seek to develop within designated town centres. Only once they have demonstrated that there are no suitable town centre sites should they then consider edge of centre locations. It is only after all other options have been exhausted that applicants should consider out-of-town locations.

In larger urban centres, some local planning authorities have used edge of centre retail development to act as a catalyst for wider regeneration of an area. These are matters that local authorities should consider and evaluate the likely benefits against the impacts of such an approach.

5. Does the Welsh Government still have the power to offer Urban Investment Grants? Has there been any change in recent years to the relevant legislation that modifies the purposes for which Urban Investment Grant can be used?

The Welsh Ministers have numerous powers to make grants in the field of regeneration. Powers set out in Section 126 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 were transferred to the Welsh Ministers in 1999 and permit the making of grants for the following purposes:-

- securing that land and buildings are brought into effective use;
- contributing to, or encouraging, economic development;
- creating an attractive and safe environment;
- preventing crime or reducing the fear of crime; and
- providing or improving housing or social and recreational facilities, for the purpose of encouraging people to live or work in the area or of benefiting people who live there.

Further powers are set out in Section 1 of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975, in particular:-

- making land available for development (Section 1(3)(da));
- bringing derelict land into use or improving its appearance (Section 1(3)(h)).

The powers of the Welsh Development Agency transferred to the Welsh Ministers in 2006. All of these powers would be applicable in the field of urban regeneration. It should be noted that terms used to describe particular grant schemes, such as 'Urban Investment Grant', 'Property Development Grant' and 'Regeneration Investment Grant' are not statutory.

The Urban Investment Grant was a Welsh Office gap funding scheme that transferred to the Welsh Development Agency in the late 1990s. More recently the vehicles that have tended to be used have been Property Development Grant and Regeneration Investment Grants. The latter are used to enable derelict land and buildings back into productive use and is used to secure a positive impact from local economic regeneration, improve the local environment and to support schemes which are not financially viable. Basically the grant operates to fund the gap between the gross development costs of a project and its commercial value upon completion. Generally, commercial, retail, leisure, industrial, and residential uses can be included.

I look forward to providing oral evidence to the Committee in due course.

Regards

Huw Lewis AC / AM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw', with a small mark above the first letter.

Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage

APPENDIX - DETAILS OF LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY RETAIL STUDIES

Planning Authority	Retail Documents	Date	Consultant
Bridgend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background Paper 7 – Retail Review - Bridgend County Retail Needs Planning Study 2007 to 2021, Final Report - Bridgend County Borough Council Retail Needs Planning Study: Update June 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2011 January 2008 June 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CACI Ltd CACI Property Consulting
Caerphilly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retailing Deposit Local Development Plan up to 2021 	October 2008	
Cardiff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background Paper No.3: District and Local Centres 	March 2009	
Carmarthenshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carmarthenshire Retail Study 2009 	February 2010	Nathanial Litchfield & partners
Ceredigion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ceredigion Local Development Plan Topic Paper Retail 	2008	
Conwy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background Paper 15 Retail Study 	March 2011	
Denbighshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denbighshire Retail and Leisure Study main report - Update of the Quantitative Retail Capacity Analysis from the Denbighshire Retail and Leisure Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2003 September 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roger Tym & Partners Roger Tym & Partners
Flintshire	No Documents Available		
Gwynedd	No Documents Available		
Isle of Anglesey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Development Plan 	2006	

	Evidence Base - Retail		
Merthyr Tydfil	- Topic Paper, Hearing Session 5 Retail Strategy and Policies		
Monmouthshire	- Monmouthshire Retail and Leisure Study.	April 2010	Drivers Jonas Deloitte
Neath Port Talbot	- Retail Topic Paper	September 2011	
Newport	- Retail Study of Newport	September 2010	Colliers not LDP Doc
Pembrokeshire	- Background Paper for Local Development Plan: Retail Main Towns - Background Paper for Local Development Plan: Local Retail Centres	July 2008 April 2009	
Powys	No Documents Available		
Rhondda Cynon Taf	- Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy - Treorchy Town Centre Regeneration Strategy - Pontypridd Regeneration Strategy Final Report - Llantrisant Old Town Regeneration Strategy - Supplementary Report on proposed town centre Llantrisant - Tonyrefail Town Centre Regeneration Strategy - Ferndale Regeneration Strategy - Mountain Ash Town Centre Regeneration	24th January, 2003 September 2003 July 2005 5th August 2005 March 2008 7 June 2006 7 November 2006	Camlin Lonsdale, Ove Arup & Partners, King Sturge, Simon Fenton Partnership Hyder Consulting & Sutton Davies NLP Hyder Consulting

		<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Retail Capacity Assessment Quantitative Update - Rhondda Cynon Taf Retail Study: Supplementary Report on Proposed Town Centre Llantrisant, 2008 - Explanatory Memorandum on LDP Retail Evidence following changes to Pontypridd Commitments 	<p>2002</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>December 2009</p>	<p>RPS</p> <p>NLP</p> <p>NLP</p> <p>NLP</p>
Swansea		Issues Paper Retailing and Shopping Centres Swansea Local Development Plan Retailing		
Torfaen		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Torfaen Retail & Leisure Study – Main Report - Torfaen Retail Study Update 2011 	<p>September 2007</p> <p>January 2011</p>	<p>GVLA Grimley</p> <p>GVLA Grimley</p>
Vale of Glamorgan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan Retail Planning Study - Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan Retail Planning Study 	<p>September 2008</p> <p>May 2009</p>	<p>CACI Limited</p> <p>CACI Limited</p>
Wrexham		- Background Paper 6: Retail	June 2010	
Brecon Beacons National Park		- Retail Issues Paper	May 2010	
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park		- Retail Background Paper	January 2009	
Snowdonia National Park		- Background Paper 12 Retail Assessment	Spring 2009	

