

## **Comments of Cwmpas (Consultee)**

### **2nd Deposit Revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018 – 2033**

By way of background, Cwmpas, previously known as the Wales Co-Operative Centre, is a development agency focused on building a fairer, greener economy and a more equal society, where people and planet come first. Established in 1982, Cwmpas have made it their mission to change the way our economy and society works. Cwmpas is a not for profit organisation which supports Wales' economic growth, helps communities to become stronger and more inclusive and in turn supports people in Wales to improve their lives and livelihoods by delivering a range of projects which help social businesses to grow; help people to learn digital skills, help people set up their own co-operatives in care and housing and help people to invest in their community.

Having reviewed the consultation document, Cwmpas sees a clear synergy between the key issues, challenges and vision statements within the Deposit Plan of the Revised LDP and community led housing programmes. Community-led housing is housing development where the community plays an integral role in identifying local needs and bringing a proposal forward with a view to delivering social and economic benefits to a local area. Such projects meet long term housing needs and provide affordable housing as defined within Welsh planning policy. Furthermore, there is support for community led housing within the Welsh Government 'Programme for Government 2021 – 2026'.

For a scheme to be 'community led', the community must be integrally involved throughout the process of the development in terms of identifying the need and maintaining a strong involvement in delivering housing to meet that need even though in some cases the community does not necessarily have to initiate and manage the development process itself or build the homes themselves. Indeed, there are many ways for people to be involved in meeting their own housing needs. Community groups may respond to housing needs in their local area and seek to deliver their own homes. Local authorities, landowners, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) or small builders may seek to provide housing that benefits the local area in perpetuity, and work with the community to enable this to happen. However, all such community led housing schemes are characterised by providing housing for the local community that is affordable and available in perpetuity and by providing far greater certainty to local communities as to who the housing will be occupied by and potentially offers new opportunities and benefits for sustainable local economic, social and environmental development.

Finally, it is important to recognise that community led housing is not a case of 'one size fits all' as it can come about for a number of reasons and take a number of different forms. For example, co-housing is a design methodology used by intentional communities to create spaces that promote connectivity and togetherness; housing co-operatives are housing organisations controlled, managed and owned by its members; and Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are legal entities set up by communities to provide and protect assets of community value such as genuinely affordable housing. As such, no two projects are the same. Community led housing can be adapted and moulded to create bespoke solutions that address particular issues and factors, whether socially or spatially, that have led to a group forming.

In summary, community led schemes share three common principles: a requirement that meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the process; the local community group or organisation own, manages or stewards the homes and in a manner of their choosing; and a requirement that the benefits to the local area and/or specified community are clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.

More specifically, community led housing directly addresses the issues and challenges within Carmarthenshire as identified in the Deposit in terms of:

- Rebalancing demography through the creation of affordable community led housing that will create opportunities to retain and attract young people and thereby foster social and economic sustainability of the communities of Carmarthenshire;
- Addressing inequality by increasing the amount, quality and choice of affordable housing options within the County;
- Addressing the climate emergency with net zero housing developments that are inherently sustainable in terms of build standards and technology, founded upon placemaking principles, reduce dependence of private modes of transport in favour of active travel and which provide green spaces and local food production opportunities;
- Addressing the nature emergency where preservation and enhancement of the biodiversity qualities of a site is a key component.

It is considered a positive feature that the consultation document is underpinned throughout by the principles of placemaking, good quality design and the role of local community distinctiveness and character and within that the essence of the Well Being of Future Generations Act and post-pandemic recovery as if anything the pandemic has seen the role of 'home' and 'place' become more important than ever. Cwmpas believes that these elements are essential to fostering community cohesion, resilience, safety and connection, and creating places and environments where the health and well-being of individuals, residents, business and communities can thrive and flourish and reach their full potential based on community led affordable housing delivery at its heart. As such, community led housing will be fundamental both to the qualitative nature of new affordable housing in the County and to the quantitative targets of delivering upon the new affordable homes targets for the RDLP period 2018 – 2033. Moreover, as well as further indirect impacts and outcomes on all seven of the WBSG Act goals, there is a direct correlation of community led housing with those goals concerned with Healthier Wales, More Equal Wales, Wales of Cohesive Communities, and Globally Responsive Wales.

Therefore, to develop the consideration that the Deposit Plan makes in terms of the variety of housing types and tenures that are capable of being developed on a site, Cwmpas believes that an explicit statement in the document around the role and opportunity presented by community led affordable housing would be beneficial, a positive addition to the emerging RDLP and importantly, it would be in with the spirit and policy context of PPW 11. Indeed, Cwmpas would respectfully request and positively welcome an overt reference to community led housing as part of the affordable housing 'offer' rather than simply traditional forms of

affordable housing delivery through SHG-funded development by RSLs or Section 106 Agreements.

In making these comments and suggestions to include explicit reference to community led housing in the Deposit Plan, as a signatory to the to the Design Commission for Wales Placemaking Charter under its previous name as the Wales Co-operative Centre, and with reference to the Placemaking Guide 2020, Cwmpas believes that there is direct integration and correlation with the essence of community led housing and national planning policy as contained within PPW Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes in terms of social, environmental, economic and cultural well-being thus:

- Creating and Sustaining Communities – community led housing promotes health and well-being and globally responsible Wales principles in the WBFGA legislation and makes a very direct and clear link between housing development in a community and meeting the housing needs of that community whilst allowing that community genuine input into the development process. Furthermore, the functionality of community led housing for example in terms of the sense of community, shared spaces and facilities, and social interactions is demonstrative of the essence of creating cohesive communities;
- Facilitating Accessible and Healthy Environments – for example, a key design principle of community led housing is to reduce dependence on private modes of transport and to encourage active modes of travel within the sustainable transport hierarchy. Furthermore, community led housing is a community facility or asset as it is the delivery of affordable housing by the community and for the community;
- Maximising Environmental Protection and Limiting Environmental Impact – community led housing addresses sustainability in its broadest sense of social, environmental, economic and cultural sustainability by creating viable and sustainable places through for example shared facilities and spaces such as growing areas, communal laundry or co-working hubs
- Making Best Use of Resources – community led housing will often look to develop on brownfield sites or through repurposing existing buildings or on underused land where perhaps it is not viable for a private developer or RSL to develop new affordable housing. A good case study example here is Bunker Housing in Brighton (<https://bhclt.org.uk/bunker-housing-co-op-starts-building/> ) and in this context Cwmpas would welcome opportunities to engage with community groups on sites that might be considered too small, go unnoticed or present technical challenges to bring such sites forward for community led affordable housing;
- Growing Our Economy – community led housing contributes and responds positively to new patterns of work in developing places and environments for communal working or more sustainable spaces that balance work and living

Furthermore, it is considered that a direct reference to community led housing in the Deposit Plan document will address and remove some of the potential barriers and challenges faced in the delivery of such forms of housing in terms of the availability of sites, enhancing evidence bases of housing need through genuine community level assessment and survey to supplement wider LHMA's and, standards within community led housing schemes around design, density, energy and sustainable transport most closely reflect placemaking principles.

In addition, explicit reference to community led housing will bridge the knowledge gap around models and management of such housing when compared to other more traditional forms of private and social housing development and thereby recognise the important role and contribution community led affordable housing makes in addressing pressing and urgent housing needs.

Furthermore, a direct reference will establish the context for subsequent planning policy development in the emerging RLDP and subsequent reiteration of SPG around affordable housing in terms of: site specific community led housing allocations or provision of such housing as a proportion (say 5 -10%) of the dwellings on larger strategic site; rural exceptions policies; and in the repurposing or more efficient and effective re-use of community building and land. In addition, there are proven examples across the United Kingdom of land assets and the disposal thereof being ring-fenced for development as community led housing with a leading case example being Bristol City Council - <https://news.bristol.gov.uk/press-releases/7bfd6b25-f975-40b2-9468-5471a909da7a/groups-chosen-to-develop-community-led-housing-sites>.

Finally, community led housing proposals can have a positive impact on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English in local communities. For example, a recent paper by Dr Simon Brooks (Chair of the Commission for Welsh-Speaking Communities clearly outlines the extent of the impact of second homes in Welsh language communities. Cwmpas believes that this issue is a symptom of the imbalance of the housing market, and the lack of control people living in places across Wales have over the future of their communities. This necessitates policy intervention, and Cwmpas would welcome the opportunity to contribute our perspectives following our experience of working with community-led housing projects, social enterprises and co-operatives in Wales. Cwmpas considers that community-led and co-operative models of housing can play a crucial role in rebalancing the housing market so power rests with communities and community cohesion, resilience and well-being is prioritised at least to the same extent as profit and economic value. Community-led models support the housing needs of a local community, ensuring that there is sufficient affordable housing available, which in turn protects the survival of the Welsh language.