

RUPERRA CASTLE PRESERVATION TRUST (RCPT)

COMMENTS ON DRAFT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RCPT was established in 1996 to ensure the repair and restoration of Ruperra Castle and to secure public access to it.

1.2 Ruperra Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and Grade 2* Listed Building in south east Caerphilly. It was built originally in 1626 for Sir Thomas Morgan and is a Stuart pageant castle, unique in Wales. Now a neglected ruin, its history provides a fascinating insight into the lives of its owners and those who worked and were trained there.

RCPT COMMENTS

2.1 The 11 Outcomes in the draft National Development Framework (dNDF) are difficult to disagree with, but are not clear enough for a 20 year Development Plan. We suggest that consideration is given to making the targets more specific, so that they make a measurable difference to people's quality of life. We would support an NDF that encourages solutions relevant to Wales' landscape, patterns of development, history, culture and language while pointing us forward to a new, more sustainable, future.

2.2 Welsh Government (WG) has signalled that it wants to strike out in a new direction, framed by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) and Climate Emergency. We urge WG to take the opportunity of this consultation to ensure that the final NDF reflects both, and incorporates specific targets and projects to attract sustainable industries including tourism to share our talent, landscape and historic environment.

2.3 In this context, RCPT strongly supports the proposal for a Green Belt to the north of Cardiff. However, we suggest that it is defined more clearly without overlapping an Area of Growth (which appears contradictory). We suggest that it should include the Ruperra Estate and historic parkland, as well as Coed Craig Ruperra which provides its wooded setting, and extend from Caerphilly Mountain in the north to the M4 in the south. Given the historic and agricultural value of the green triangle between Newport, Cardiff and Caerphilly - as evidenced by the Caerphilly Sustainable Landscape Masterplan and Agricultural land classification – and the fact that it has no significant physical infrastructure, we consider that Green Belt designation is fully justified. It would provide long term protection for unique heritage assets as well as Wales' best quality agricultural land - vital for the security of future food supplies. We suggest that the Green Belt is mapped on a geographic base to improve clarity and guide preparation of the Capital City Region Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

2.4 We note that Caerphilly County Borough Council has reflected sustainability and distinctiveness in its adopted LDP policies, and has emphasised the imperative to achieve a low carbon future for its own operations, setting an example for residents, business and voluntary sector to follow. RCPT has been involved in developing, with the Council and many other voluntary groups, an EU-funded Landscape Strategy for Caerphilly which integrates with the Valleys Regional Park by creating an increasingly green setting for its linked settlements. This concept should be extended across Wales, with National Parks, AONBs and Green Belts providing added protection for these vital urban lungs for recreation and containment of settlements. Creating a linked network of green spaces would reduce urban sprawl and - together with the investment planned in Metro - encourage use of public transport and other sustainable modes of travel, making for a fitter and healthier Wales.