



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

A Guide to Future Wales: Frequently Asked Questions 2nd Edition

Addresses common questions raised by local planning authorities following the publication of Future Wales in February 2021.

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What is this document?

This document has been prepared to support Future Wales. It provides guidance on the most commonly asked questions put to the Welsh Government since publication of Future Wales in February 2021.

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What is the status of this document?

This document is published for information purposes only. It is not part of Future Wales and it is not a policy document. It reflects legislation and does not introduce any new requirements. Readers are advised to review legislation for certainty on statutory requirements; and Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Future Wales for certainty on policy.

Does the guidance in the first ‘A Guide to Future Wales: Frequently Asked Questions’ still apply?

Yes.

Will formal planning guidance be published to support Future Wales?

Yes. Future Wales states that guidance will be prepared on the development of on-shore wind, and strategic placemaking. Preparation of this guidance will commence in 2021.

The Welsh Government will keep under review the potential role of further guidance to support the implementation of Future Wales’s policies.

Are digital maps of Pre Assessed Areas for Wind Energy (Policy 17) available?

Yes. These can be viewed on the [Data Map Wales mapping portal](#).

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Can Local Planning Authorities commence informal work to support the preparation of Strategic Development Plans in advance of the formal establishment of Corporate Joint Committees?

Yes. The Corporate Joint Committees (CJC) Establishment Regulations will come into force in February 2022 for South East Wales and June/July 2022 for the remaining three CJC regions thus enabling CJC's to exercise the function of preparing a Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

In advance of this, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) within each region should begin to scope out the evidence (both existing and new) that will be needed to prepare an SDP; ensure approaches to plan making (e.g. methodologies) are compatible and capable of supporting a joint regional approach; and review Future Wales, PPW and other key strategies and policies to develop an early understanding of the issues an SDP will need to address. A thorough understanding of resources, including financial matters, will assist a smooth transition to a regionalised way of working.

Future Wales Policy 19 sets out the policies SDPs should establish for the region and the **Development Plans Manual Section 10** contains detailed guidance on the preparation and content of SDPs.

Does the Welsh Government still intend to develop a National Forest? Is information available on the proposal?

Yes - the Welsh Government is moving forward with its plans to develop a National Forest. Potential locations are currently based on existing woodland and there is a **diagrammatic map** on the Welsh Government website which identifies 14 woodlands by name.

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Will the Welsh Government be publishing further mapping for the areas for consideration for green belts?

No. It is for SDPs to define the definitive boundaries of the green belt areas.

How should LPAs consider sites on and/or near the boundary of the area for consideration for green belts?

In advance of the adoption of an SDP, which will define the boundary of a green belt area, LPAs should use their judgement to determine whether a site should be treated as being in or out of the area for consideration. LPAs should set out their thinking and the process they have followed to make their decision.

Examples of questions that can be used to assist decision makers:-

1. Where is the site considered to lie on the regional strategic diagram?
2. Does the site naturally form part of the wider open area which would logically be covered by a green belt? Or is it distinctly separate from the wider open area?
3. How does the site relate to the built form of existing settlements?
4. How does the site perform with regard to the purposes of the green belt as set out in PPW?

Is agricultural development acceptable in principle in the areas for consideration for green belts?

Yes. PPW paragraph 3.75 states that development for justified 'rural enterprise'

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needs is not inappropriate in a green belt. TAN 6 paragraph 4.3.2 states ‘rural enterprises comprise land related businesses including agriculture, forestry and other activities that obtain their primary inputs from the site, such as the processing of agricultural, forestry and mineral products together with land management activities and support services (including agricultural contracting)’. Development related to agriculture would not therefore be inappropriate in principle.

Does the Welsh Government support non-retail uses in town centres?

Yes. The Welsh Government operates a town centres first policy which requires developments complimentary to retail and commercial centres (described in PPW) to seek sites in those centres first before considering other locations (see PPW 4.3.18). This is the most sustainable location for such uses, in terms of land use, accessibility and supporting vibrant and viable centres.

Future Wales supports this principle and Policy 6 requires significant new commercial, retail, education, health, leisure or public service facilities be located within town and city centres. These developments, which may have large footprints, have previously been directed to less sustainable locations which are less accessible by active travel and public transport and are less likely to support decarbonisation policies.

SDPs and Local Development Plans (LDPs) may consider allocating sit

Is there a definition of ‘significant’ for Future Wales Policy 6?

No. This is for the LPA to determine based on their knowledge of their local area. The meaning of the term ‘significant’ will vary in different parts of Wales and relate to the scale, role and function of settlements.

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SDPs and LDPs can set out what development they consider to be significant in the context of their areas and how this may vary between different settlements. In determining whether a development is of a significant scale (in advance of relevant SDP/LDP policies) LPAs should consider the scale of the new development in the context of the settlement and/or area it is to be located in and whether it is wider than local in nature. This could include consideration of the potential number of visitors and the likely distances from which visitors will be drawn.

What approach should be taken to the location of smaller, local development?

The same principles should be applied at a smaller scale. Walkable, mixed use local centres should be the focus for new local commercial, retail, education, health, leisure or public service facilities (and residential where appropriate) as opposed to an approach that encourages a more dispersed pattern of development. These principles are not new. The benefits of local, mixed use centres providing a range of local services and facilities over a dispersed, unplanned approach are self-evident.

As recognised in PPW (4.3.21) some educational, healthcare and community uses, for example, may have specific accessibility requirements which mean they need to be located close to the communities they serve. LPAs should be aware of such requirements and plan accordingly.

LPAs should use their development plans to strengthen and support local centres and ensure development management decisions do not undermine the function of important local centres.

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Are retail need tests required for all significant uses?

No. Retail need tests are only required for retail developments, as described in Planning Policy Wales and TAN 4 Retail and Commercial Centre Development. Other significant uses affected by this policy should apply the sequential test if the proposal cannot be accommodated in a city or town centre.

When will Mobile Action Zones be established and where will they be?

The Welsh Government is working to establish the location of the zones and will engage with key stakeholders in the coming months to finalise their exact whereabouts. Most Mobile Action Zones will be in areas where there is no mobile 4G coverage from any mobile network provider but where there is 'latent' demand such as homes, businesses, roads, rail, community and tourism sites.

What does 'gigabit capable' mean in the context of Future Wales Policy 13?

Gigabit capable is a term used to refer to fast broadband connectivity typically delivered by fibre to the premises (FTTP) technology, although other technologies can also achieve similar speeds. FTTP is capable of delivering 1000 Mbps (or 1 gigabit) and beyond, although actual speeds depend on the internet service provided.

Future Wales requires development sites to be Gigabit capable which, as a minimum, means provision of ducting alongside other essential services. Ducting is simply to ensure that fibre broadband is available and can be easily installed and connected to properties. Occasionally other forms of broadband may be appropriate such as fixed wireless access.

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In most cases developers will register with a broadband network provider (for example Openreach) to arrange for the provision of broadband infrastructure which will include both the ducting and laying of fibre if it is available. Developers should inform a broadband network provider early on in the development process, so that they can be advised on how and when infrastructure will be incorporated on the development site.

The supporting text to Future Wales Policy 2 says that ‘New developments in urban areas should aim to have a density of at least 50 dwellings per hectare (net), with higher densities in more central and accessible locations’.

Does this mean that 50 dwellings per hectare is a minimum that must be achieved on all sites?

No. 50 dwellings per hectare is not a target, but it represents a level that can support public transport and local facilities by creating a critical mass. Policy 2 states that increasing population density is a strategic placemaking principle. Local planning authorities are best placed to consider the local and site context of any given development and to determine an appropriate density for the development that enables it to deliver on all the placemaking principles. Further guidance on considering appropriate densities can be found in the [Site & Context Analysis Guide](#).

Where can I view Future Wales?

[Future Wales](#) can be viewed online.

Where can I find more information on how Future

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Wales was prepared?

The **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004** (as amended by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015) sets out the statutory process for the preparation and review of Future Wales.

The **Statement of Public Participation** sets out the timetable and process for the preparation of Future Wales.

The **Integrated Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment** sets out the assessment process that supported the preparation of Future Wales.

The **Evidence Compendium** sets out the range of evidence that informed the preparation of Future Wales.

The **Future Wales webpages** set out a range of supporting information.

How can I be kept informed of news about Future Wales?

Subscribe to the **Future Wales newsletter**.

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