

ITEM 14b

AS FROM MERTHYR MAWR
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

To BCBC

JULY 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

My council has instructed me to write to you with regard to the consultation process for the BCBC draft deposit Local Development Plan. We understand that, in these Covid times, an exhibition of the LDP aims, objectives and strategic development areas has not been possible, however discussions with members of the community have revealed that there is virtually no awareness of the new LDP or of the consultation process. It is not, for instance, obvious on the BCBC Facebook page. Three weeks into the process my council was asked if they would like a poster to put on the council noticeboard. In this day and age, this is not an adequate means of engaging with local people. The situation is made worse by the fact that the public were not allowed to comment at the initial preferred strategy stage.

Residents who do become aware of the LDP consultation and what it will mean for their communities are faced with an intimidating and obscuring form with which to make their response. If their comments relate to a specific development site, they must go through 12 pages and then scroll down. It is hard to see how this is anything other than obfuscation. An email address is given but there is no instruction regarding the necessity to use the map references rather than just place names.

When seeking help from the Communications, Marketing and Engagement team, the phone number on the Replacement Local development Plan Consultation page has been out of order.

It is the view of my council that wholly insufficient measures have been taken by BCBC particularly in view of the Covid restrictions which have switched off the social networks through which information might have been shared, to broadcast the LDP process and enable people to "have their say" on major development plans within their community. The lack of reach and "user-friendliness" of the consultation process, in concert with the effects of Covid restrictions, is in no way, mitigated by the extra 2 weeks which may or may not have been added to the consultation period.

My council believes that BCBC is, in fact, opening themselves up to Judicial review as a result of the lack of proper and effective public engagement.

Yours faithfully

FOOTNOTE FOR INFORMATION TO BTC