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Wednesday 7th May 2014

**Cllr Ramesh Patel**

Cabinet member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability  
City of Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Patel

**Meeting, City of Cardiff Council at County Hall**

**Present Cllr Ramesh Patel, James Clemence, Neil Hanratty**

**Civic Society: David Eggleton, Peter Cox**

Thank you for meeting with Peter Cox and I last Thursday 1st May 2014 to discuss our concerns about The Enterprise Zone and our alternative model for development of NW Cardiff that we have developed for the LDP in conjunction with local residents' groups.

This letter is not intended as a note of the meeting or minutes, rather I am setting out, particularly for the leader of the council who was unable to be with us, the main points we made in order to ensure both of you are fully aware of the opportunity we described and the dangers to the future of the capital city that will arise from strategic level inaction. It is necessarily a long letter.

**Enterprise Zone**

Our main point is that the contribution it will make to Cardiff must be fully recognised and integrated in a clear and explicit way (which it currently is not in our view) into the LDP itself. The 10,000 jobs and 2000 dwellings originally scoped would represent many hectares of green land that need not be built on, and the original assessment that shows this as a nil net contribution must be clarified. We learnt from you that Cllr Bale has delayed the master plan for the area until September in order reconsider the project, and that a convention will be held then to get a wide and balanced input from an international audience before the White Paper is prepared. We thoroughly agree with this approach: the EZ is a once in a lifetime opportunity to get this next and important phase of Cardiff's development right, and we look forward to the promised invitation to participate in the convention process.

I took the opportunity after our meeting to meet with the architects Bellerophon, at the public consultation in Grangetown, and was impressed with the plans for the first, residential phase of the project. The improvement of the eastern Taff embankment, the varied and interesting skyline, and the incorporation of green infrastructure were most encouraging.

### **NW Cardiff, CCS proposals for a new town approach**

Our view of the development of NW Cardiff is that the proposed extensions to existing communities that were recommended in the Deposit LDP were made without adequate regard for transport and social/community infrastructure. We regard this as a serious mistake: it will lead to catastrophic congestion and repeat the mistakes of northeast Cardiff made at the end of the last century.

Although we found that we were in agreement on the idea of transport oriented development as described by James Clemence and Neil Hanratty, the Deposit LDP proposal for NW Cardiff does not, in our opinion, implement transport solutions that get anywhere near resolving current let alone future congestion issues in that sector.

We raised this issue with Cllr Cook on 18th July 2013, following the 'no status' draft LDP, and felt that there was a 'meeting of minds', but unfortunately made no record of the discussions. We have since developed the problem definition and a potential solution, which we explored in concept with the LDP scrutiny committee on 3rd. October 2013, and again with Cllr Hinchey and Andrew Gregory on 18th November 2013 as part of an informal briefing in advance of our submission to the formal consultation on the Deposit LDP. This formal submission was made on 25th November and taken together these meetings and submissions cover a considerable period of time for serious consideration to have been made of our proposals. They are not new.

We were able in our last response to include a formal and substantially developed proposal for a New Town for NW Cardiff that should replace the sites identified for development in this sector, the so called 'Strategic Sites'. The strategic importance of this whole area has been unrecognised in the LDP: it is the only direction of future growth for the city for the foreseeable future; as such its planning deserves much more attention than it has been given.

We are strongly of the view - supported widely by community councils in the area - that the plans for this sector should be urgently reconsidered at a strategic level by the council leadership in much the same way that the EZ has been reconsidered, before the LDP is finalised this summer. You do not consider this possible citing the lack of time to make changes, although, as I say above, these proposals have been live since at least the scrutiny committee review last year. If there are no focused changes made in this section of the LDP it will mean that it will be presented to Welsh Government without the benefit of a rethought plan for this sector of the city and we will be left making the case to the inspector even later in the process. Of course, the hiatus between the deposit of the LDP and the inspector's decision will mean a free for all in the NW by developers. Sadly, we don't share the planners' optimism that 'masterplanning' will lead to greatly improved design, sustainability, or choice once developers get started.

Our idea of a linear New Town from Fairwater to Llantrisant, and beyond, using the Metro line as the central route captures many of the qualities that you are seeking in your administration:

- a series of small townships that can be built as demand evolves, giving absolute flexibility and protection against forecast inaccuracy
- retention of green space for recreation between and around each township
- commuting into Cardiff by Metro will resolve traffic issues, not addressed seriously in the existing plan for NW Cardiff
- sustainable communities of individual character grouped within walking distance of a railway station are encouraged
- this takes a positive step forward to the Capital City Region, with a relatively simple, single, interface with RCT
- it is imaginative and forward looking, the 21st century New Town represents today's big idea, and has had support from many quarters. There have been 279 submissions to the Wolfson 2014 prize for design of a New Town, unfortunately we have not been quick enough to enter.

Above all, our New Town proposal has the buy-in of local community representatives, we have worked closely with the NW Cardiff group and have their support in principle. You will have seen that all local resident submissions to the LDP consultation object to the sites proposed in the LDP yet they have given our proposal support; people are not against growth they object to the way that growth is planned.

The recent referendum in Fairwater indicates the potential level of opposition to badly developed plans, opposition - even that based on misleading information and half-truths - leads to delay and cost. Our proposal does at least have widespread support, and the prospect of a partnership/co-operative way of managing growth that does not swamp existing communities deserves time to be understood. If development goes ahead on the basis of the strategic sites you have chosen, as amended by the alternative site submissions, then it will ensure that the idea of a new town can never be implemented, and the whole area east of the link road and south of the M4 filled in eventually and as a developers priority.

We have proposed that the New Town should be developed by a structure like a Development Corporation of which there are many potential models, including the cooperative one at Owenstown in Lanarkshire. The Town and Country Planning Association has invested much work on developing partnership models in this arena. This is a difficult subject for many and clearly has a political context.

In view of the time constraints facing us, and the opportunities provided by a wider discussion of national planning, city-region development, and national and regional transport infrastructure ambitions, we offer the following as a way forward:

1. identify the draft, preferred Metro routes in the city as a priority
2. identify a development site as a narrow strip along the Metro, as far as Creigiau

3. declare the intention to develop this land using a development partnership/corporation, this can be done by the Minister under current legislation. This also opens up alternative and innovative ways of financing the development in times of constraint.
4. tie development to the construction of the Metro, ensuring sustainable communities and avoiding the congestion at Radyr, Danescourt, Llandaff and Pontcanna that will result from the current LDP proposals.

We have made many other suggestions for focussed changes to improve the LDP, but this issue remains the single biggest area of disagreement with the planned approach being undertaken by the City Council. Our New Town proposal has the advantage of support by many who live in the area, who have justifiable fears of inappropriate development by developers who have no or little interest in the social impact of their activities or commitment to the long-term strategic goals of the city.

We urge the council's new leadership to urgently reconsider the position, as you have for the EZ, and change the way NW Cardiff is developed. We have a presentation of our proposal ready to give to all that are interested in understanding more, and who are open to better ways of achieving development in this sector with local support.

Yours Truly



David Eggleton  
For Cardiff Civic Society