

Objection re: RLDP Consultation process

I am raising a general objection to the way in which the consultation process has been carried out and am basing my comments on personal experience since July 2025 and a review of the **‘Housing Growth in Barry – Report of Public Consultation’** document. I believe there are structural weaknesses, omissions, and procedural gaps that undermine the robustness and inclusivity of the consultation and question its legitimacy.

In broad terms, the consultation process surrounding the proposed developments raises significant concerns about accessibility and fairness. The consultation feedback form was difficult to locate and use, being hidden via multiple web pages rather than clearly signposted. The consultation portal itself was poorly designed, being overly complicated and unnecessarily layered. The sheer volume of documentation across the site created unnecessary obstacles for residents who wanted to take part. Under the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005, planning authorities have a clear duty to ensure that consultation arrangements are accessible and enable meaningful engagement from the community.

Planning Policy Wales sets out firm expectations that public participation must be transparent, inclusive, and straightforward, ensuring that all individuals are able to contribute to the planning process without undue difficulty.

When consultation tools are poorly designed, or overly complicated or burdensome, as they were in this consultation, this calls into question the credibility and legitimacy of the consultation exercise.

Consultation limited to the Preferred Strategy stage (not site-specific consultation)

The consultation undertaken (Dec 2023–Feb 2024) focused on high-level strategy, not detailed impacts on specific sites such as NE Barry or alternative sites. The report itself states the exercise was on the *Preferred Strategy*, which “identifies how much sustainable growth is needed and where this growth will broadly be located.”

Gap: Residents were not consulted on the detailed implications of individual sites (e.g., infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, transport, drainage), limiting the ability of the public to make informed representations early in the process.

No evidence of direct engagement with affected landowners or communities for the largest site

The report acknowledges major deliverability issues with the largest key site (North East Barry), including inability to secure landowner agreement across the fragmented landholdings. “An agreement could not be secured with all relevant landowners.”

Gap: The Council relied on promoters’ claims rather than conducting independent landowner engagement or reviewing deliverability before public consultation. As a result, the public were consulted on a strategic option that was later abandoned.

Preferred Strategy proceeded despite strong objections and unresolved issues

There were “objections to each of the key sites” during the public consultation, yet the Preferred Strategy was endorsed unchanged by Full Council on 30 Sept 2024.

Gap: There is no evidence that objections were meaningfully incorporated before endorsing the Strategy. This suggests the consultation informed the Council but did not shape the outcome.

Lack of site-specific technical assessments available at early consultation stage and at this later stage

Much of the consultation occurred *before* key technical evidence was available, including:

- Viability
- Deliverability
- Ownership constraints
- Infrastructure and transport assessments
- Environmental constraints (SSSI proximity, flood risk, etc.)

The report explicitly states that the viability and deliverability of sites (including the 900-unit NE Barry site) were still being assessed after the consultation.

In relation to North West Barry and from mid-July 2025, I requested to speak to Place Scrutiny Committee and gave my views. At that meeting, and at a subsequent full council meeting that I observed, residents like me and councillors who were challenging the Planning Team were told to wait and that detail would be available at the later consultation stage, via public meetings and the consultation portal. However, either this detail was not made available because it doesn’t exist or else was it is buried in thousands of pages of documents that we have been given 6 weeks sift through in order to find out what is relevant.

Gap: The public were expected to comment without access to essential technical information, undermining the quality of feedback and the transparency of the process. This is still the case now, whereby after reading as much of the key information as possible, there are still huge gaps in basic information that help residents make an informed decision.

Consultation did not explore alternative growth locations until later

The public was shown only the five original key housing-led sites, even though at least one (NE Barry) was already facing deliverability challenges. Only after public consultation did the Council begin considering alternative options.

Gap: The public were not consulted on alternative or fallback options, limiting their ability to compare spatial choices or suggest more acceptable solutions.

Evidence of restricted consultation scope for the Barry community

The report notes that Barry is expected to take substantial growth but there is no record of targeted community engagement specific to Barry - the largest and most affected settlement.

Gap: No tailored engagement with Barry residents or community groups was undertaken, despite the disproportionate scale of proposed development for Barry.

Limited clarity on how comments influenced later site selection

Although an “Initial Consultation Report” was prepared, the process described is top-down:

- Consultation → summary → Preferred Strategy endorsed without change
- Only later did site feasibility issues force adjustments

Gap: A lack of transparency exists regarding how community feedback shaped decisions. Changes to the strategy arose from landownership/deliverability - not from public concerns.

Heavy reliance on written representations

My own experience and the Consultation report provided no evidence of:

- community workshops
- stakeholder panels
- co-design sessions
- facilitated deliberation
- youth engagement
- hard-to-reach community engagement
- ‘what does this mean for my area?’ summaries or similar

The process seemed to rely solely on written submissions. When we attended the in-person consultation event in Barry Memorial Hall in February 2026, there was no one to record our comments, we were given no answers to our queries and concerns, and we were constantly told to go and look at the consultation portal to get information and submit our concerns. The in-person event was simply a ‘signposting to the consultation

portal' event. It was not meaningful engagement and cannot legitimately be called a consultation event.

Gap: This method excludes those less able to engage through formal written consultation, reducing representativeness.

No community engagement prior to selecting the original five “key sites”

The five major sites (incl. North East Barry) were selected **before** consultation.

The report states: “As part of the Preferred Strategy, 5 new key housing-led sites were identified...”

Gap: The public were not involved in early spatial option development; instead, they were asked to react to a pre-determined set of locations.

Reactive, not proactive, approach to community concerns

The document describes a process where council decisions (such as dropping the NE Barry site) follow behind-the-scenes technical negotiation rather than public influence. The public consultation did not trigger the change - the failure of landowner agreement did.

Gap: Public sentiment had little demonstrable impact on spatial strategy development.

The consultation was not inclusive, was discriminatory and fundamentally flawed. I wish for this to be included as part of my objection.