

Deals sealed on last three available residential sites on SA1 Swansea Waterfront

Contracts have been exchanged between the Welsh Government and Hale Homes – a family run company based in Neath – and with DT Technical Solutions, from Ebbw Vale.

Heads of Terms have also been agreed with a social housing group that is working up proposals for a 1.3 acre site – the last remaining site on the residential quarter.

This is the second development on SA1 being carried out by Hale Homes and will see 23 town houses built on a one acre site on a prime location. The energy efficient townhouses will be 3 1/2 storeys high with a balcony that spans the entire width of the roof space providing superb views.

DT Technical Solutions is to build 18 town houses on an adjacent half acre site.

National housebuilder Persimmon Homes West Wales is currently onsite constructing a £6m residential development of 37 new town houses and 24 apartments. Coastal Housing Group's latest £5.5m development is also underway and will provide a range of affordable 1 and 2 bedroom apartments as well as 22 three and four bedroom homes for sale. Both have previously developed a range of new homes on SA1.

There is now only one remaining residential plot on SA1 which is currently used as storage for dredged sand and is expected to become available on the market in 2018.

SA1 has proved to be a popular development attracting investment by local and national developers as well as housing associations that have built a wide range of accommodation offering a diverse variety of architectural styles.

To date 643 apartments, houses and retirement homes have been completed, with a further 133 under construction. Of this total 213 units will be 'affordable housing'.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"SA1 is transforming 96 acres of disused dockland into a dynamic and vibrant new mixed-use quarter for the city and has acted as a catalyst attracting significant investment into Swansea, helping to raise the city's profile as a great place to live, work and invest.

"I am particularly pleased that the proportion of modern, high quality affordable homes – built by the private sector and housing

associations – is more than double the percentage required under planning obligations.

“The residential development on SA1 has helped the Welsh Government meet its affordable housing targets and will continue to contribute to the latest target of delivering 20,000 affordable homes during this term of Government.”

Jonathan Hale said:

“Welsh Government were extremely helpful when we built our first phase at SA1, the townhouses in question were the first houses built at SA1 and were a resounding success.

Agents who have been acting for Welsh Government are Cushman & Wakefield.

[Come together: Taskforce visits Cymmer to #TalkValleys](#)

The Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys is holding a series of public meetings across the region to seek the views of local communities about priorities for their local areas.

Last month, the Minister for Lifelong Learning Alun Davies, who chairs the taskforce, met with pupils at Ferndale Community School and business leaders in Caerphilly to answer questions about the role of the taskforce and listen to suggestions for priority work areas.

Julie James will join other taskforce members to host a public engagement session at Croeserw Community Enterprise Centre on Thursday (February 2) and wants to hear from local residents about the challenges and opportunities for people living and working in the valleys.

She said:

“The taskforce has made some significant strides forward in recent weeks and it is clear that understanding and awareness of our work is growing.

“The engagement sessions we’ve held to date have been invaluable in helping to shape our priorities but it’s vital we continue to work with and listen to communities throughout the lifetime of the taskforce.

“From the discussions we’ve had with the public so far, some key themes have emerged. These include the importance of linking businesses with local schools to give young people the confidence and skills they need to enter into the world of work and the importance of linking infrastructure like industrial sites, schools, colleges and transport initiatives together, ensuring true connectivity for the valleys.

“I am sure more will continue to emerge in the coming weeks starting this week in Cymmer. I would urge anyone who feels passionately about where they live to come along and have their say. We’re here to listen and your views will help shape our shared vision for the valleys.”

The taskforce was set up by the Welsh Government in July and aims to build on work previously undertaken across the South Wales Valleys in a more coordinated and targeted way to meet the needs of valley communities.

This week’s session will follow a full meeting of the valleys taskforce which will take place in Llanhilleth Miners’ Institute and will focus on public services.

To learn more about the work of the taskforce or to sign up to attend one of the public meetings, please visit the [Facebook](#) page.

“Reform is an essential part of the future” says Vaughan Gething

Speaking ahead of the conference, Vaughan Gething said:

“2016 was a tumultuous year for our country. A year of unprecedented political upheaval and uncertainty that will impact on society and public service delivery for many years to come.

“But despite that uncertainty and despite record demand, our NHS delivered better health care for people across Wales. Welsh Ambulance performance is now the best in the UK, cancer survival rates continue to improve faster in Wales than any other part of the UK and overall waiting times are down 20% on last year.

“Whatever services people use – hospitals, GPs, social care, mental health services – they expect good quality care in a timely manner. Above all else, delivering on that is our prime concern.

“Our staff have worked extremely hard this winter and we have seen

diagnostic and planned care waiting times reduce dramatically over the past year. I want to thank them for their dedication and commitment to the values of the NHS and to providing high-quality care.

“I’m proud of our achievements, but I want us to be more ambitious for 2017. I want us to continue to reduce planned care and diagnostic waits. I want us to build a health service that meets and delivers on the needs of our patients and that is sustainable, in spite of the challenges.

“Reform is an essential part of the future. If we do not reform then we will not deliver the change and improvement that is needed.

“This is our mission. It won’t be easy but it will be worth it.

“It’s time good performance was recognised. I want to encourage the boards and trusts that are operating well, that are delivering for local people, and incentivise excellence in our health service. We will be exploring how we can best make that happen.”

Local Government Reform White Paper unveiled by Mark Drakeford

The White Paper, which is out for consultation until the beginning of April, is the result of months of discussions between the Welsh Government, local authorities and others on how to strengthen council services in the face of future challenges. It seeks views on proposals for mandatory regional working to deliver a range of services, address workforce issues, and implement electoral reform including allowing voting at 16. It also calls on members of the public to become active participants in local democracy and in the design and delivery of services.

Amongst the proposals are a mandatory economic development footprint that would also cover certain planning functions and transport.

Councils would have some flexibility over what footprint they use to share responsibilities for other mandated services including education improvement, social services, additional learning needs, public protection and promotion of the Welsh language.

Councillors would make up the membership of new, enhanced joint committees which would oversee these services and make decisions on behalf of their respective councils. Funding arrangements would work on the existing practice

of pooled budgets.

The local government workforce is an essential part of these proposals and the Welsh Government will consider, through the Workforce Partnership Council, how to support the transition over to the new arrangements, using statutory guidance where necessary.

Councils would still have the option of merging under the new plans and, where there is local agreement for this, the Welsh Government would work with them to make it a reality.

The White Paper also calls for a different and more equal partnership between people and the public services they use. This would see the development of a new set of principles recognising people as the best experts in how to manage their own lives and putting in place small interventions earlier to resolve issues before they escalate further.

The proposals strike a new balance between clear and unavoidable objectives for local government with flexibility for councils to determine how those shared objectives are best delivered locally. Thus the White Paper proposals provide councils with powers to choose between operating a Cabinet or Committee system and to decide how the activities of councillors are best reported to the electorate. Similarly, views are invited on enabling local authorities to adopt either 'first past the post' or 'single transferable vote' election systems. Following passage of the Wales Bill, further conversation will take place on a wider set of measures to reform electoral arrangements in Wales to improve both voter registration and turn out at elections.

In line with the new proposals, the Cabinet Secretary also announced that he would be considering how the wider local government finance system could be reformed – ensuring a fairer and more sustainable system to support local authorities in the future.

Setting out the proposals for consultation, the Local Government Secretary said:

“This White Paper is not about change for change’s sake. Our councils are working against a backdrop of extraordinary austerity and some services are facing a great deal of pressure. Local government reform is essential if we’re to make these services stronger and more resilient to cope with the demands of the future.

“The new regional arrangements will bring councils together to work more effectively in the interests of people and their communities.

“We want to see a new relationship between councils and their communities where public services support people to live independent lives and intervene only when necessary and only for as long as is required.

“We also want a new relationship between the Welsh Government and our councils; one that is based on mutual respect for the important, and different, roles we each play.

“Underpinning all of these new arrangements will be effective scrutiny and accountability, where councillors act as the champion, advocate and guide for people who elect them.

“I want to thank local authority leaders and others for their help in forming a serious and credible set of proposals. I look forward to working alongside them further following the local government elections in May.”

The consultation will close on 11th April 2017 and is available to view on the Welsh Government’s website: consultations.gov.wales.

[New authority to oversee skills and the higher and further education sectors in Wales](#)

The move comes after the Welsh Government accepted the [recommendations of an independent review carried out by Professor Ellen Hazelkorn](#), with a full consultation to follow in the spring.

Published in March 2016, it suggested:

- Establishing a single regulatory, oversight and co-ordinating authority for the post-compulsory education sector.
- The new body will be responsible for funding provision at all levels, ensuring quality and be the lead funder of research.
- Placing the needs of learners at the heart of the education system by establishing clear and flexible learning and career pathways.
- There should be equal value and support for vocational and academic pathways and connections between qualifications and the labour market need to be improved.

Kirsty Williams said:

“The boundaries between higher education and further education are now breaking down.

“Working lives are now longer, and change rapidly, and we need a system that makes it easier for people to learn and obtain the skills they need throughout their careers. This is happening

against a backdrop of rapid change in other parts of the UK and Brexit.

“The various sectors and providers in Wales are regulated and funded in different ways by different bodies, resulting in competition, gaps and confusion for learners.

“Professor Hazelkorn concluded that the current system does not focus sufficiently on learners and does not fully achieve value for money. Her report emphasised the need for post-compulsory education and training to operate as a single sector.

“I have given these proposals careful consideration and the model she puts forward builds on what is tried and tested in successful education systems, and I want Wales to enjoy those same advantages.

“This is an opportunity to shape a system where institutions of all types are encouraged to work together to meet learners’ needs, allowing them to progress and building strong links with business and providing the skills our economy needs.”