

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021

DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIC OPTIONS



BRIEFING PAPER & QUESTIONNAIRE - JULY 2006

P Mears, Chief Planning Officer, Directorate of the Environment,
Civic Offices, Pontllanfraith, NP12 2YW. ldp@caerphilly.gov.uk



CONTENTS

		Page
Section 1	Background	3
Section 2	Land Availability	4
Section 3	Developing Strategic Options	8
Section 4	Functional Analysis	15
	Upper Rhymney Valley	16
	Mid Valleys West	28
	Mid Valleys East	36
	Lower Islwyn	46
	Caerphilly Basin	55
 Appendices		
Appendix 1	Issues arising out of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal	65
Appendix 2	Proposed Scale of Housing Development	69
Appendix 3	Questionnaire	73

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 An important feature of the new Local Development Plan System is the emphasis on identifying and testing realistic alternative strategic development options. As an integral part of this process the Council will need to have regard for regional trends, cross border implications and the role and function of Caerphilly County Borough within the wider geographical context.

Caerphilly CBC Context

1.2 The LDP will be prepared by a careful analysis of the evidence base. Developing this evidence base is a continuous process. A series of information notes are in the process of being produced as part of plan preparation which monitor the success, or otherwise, of the existing policies in the Approved UDP. The information notes will be made available on the Council's web site in due course.

1.3 The Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan provides a baseline assessment of the key characteristics of the county borough and highlights key issues that the development plan will need to address (refer to Appendix 1)

Developing Options

1.4 An important new feature of the LDP is the emphasis on identifying and testing realistic strategic options that can help the Council achieve its Vision for the County Borough over the plan period. In order to develop realistic options a series of stakeholder workshops are being held in July and August. The discussions held at these workshop sessions will enable the Council to determine in consultation, what type of strategy options and what scale of future housing development would result in the most sustainable future for Caerphilly County Borough (refer to Appendix 2)

Having your say

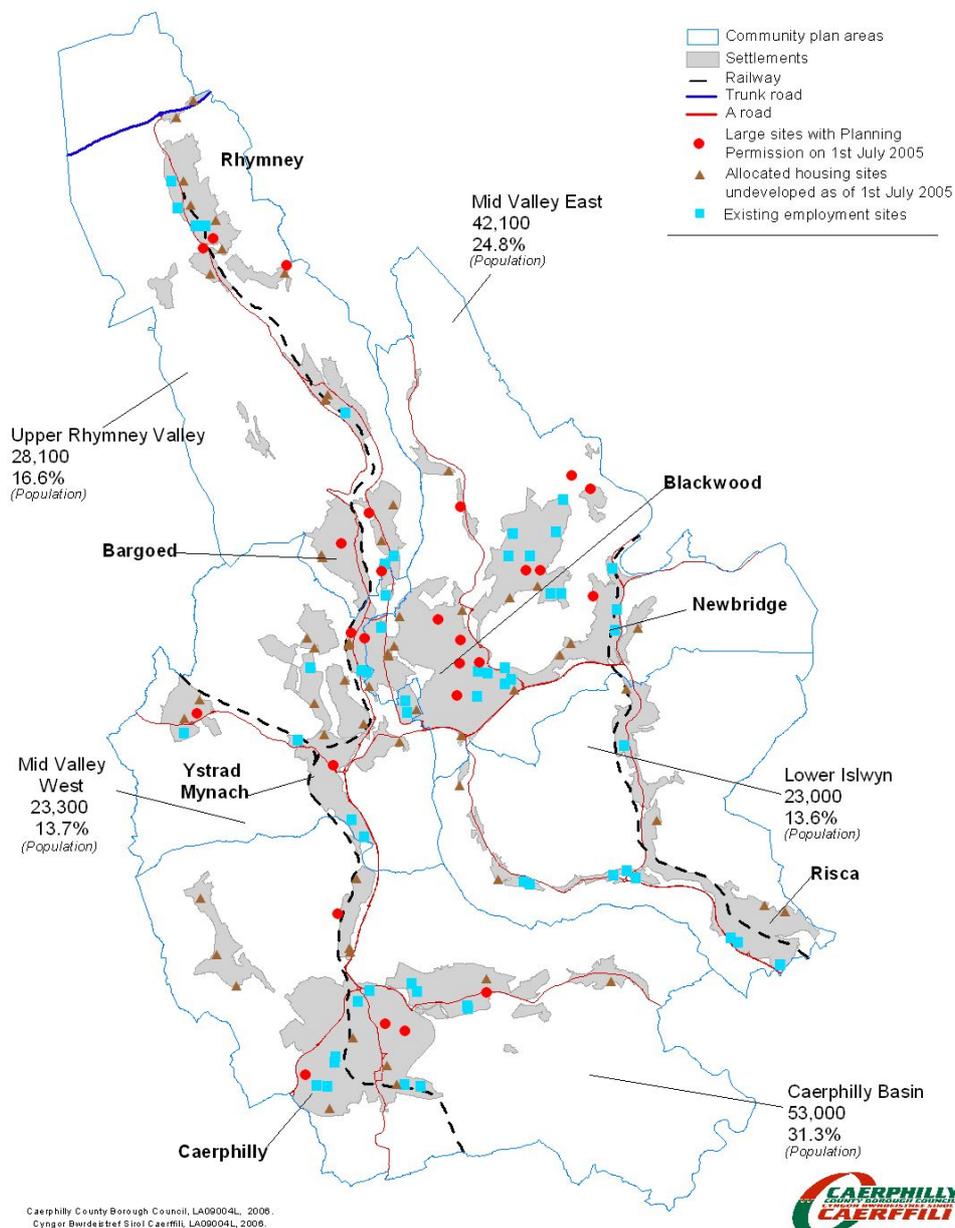
1.5 Appendix 3 comprises a Questionnaire which forms a part of the public participation exercise that the Council is undertaking to help inform the development strategy that will underpin the development plan for the county Borough up to 2021

SECTION 2 LAND AVAILABILITY

Existing Commitments

2.1 The Council has an Approved Unitary Development Plan, which allocates land for development to meet the needs of the County Borough up to 2011. In addition the Council is required to consider and determine applications for development proposals submitted by individuals and organisations on a continuing basis. As a consequence a significant land bank of sites exists and the spatial distribution of these sites will serve to inform alternative strategies for development

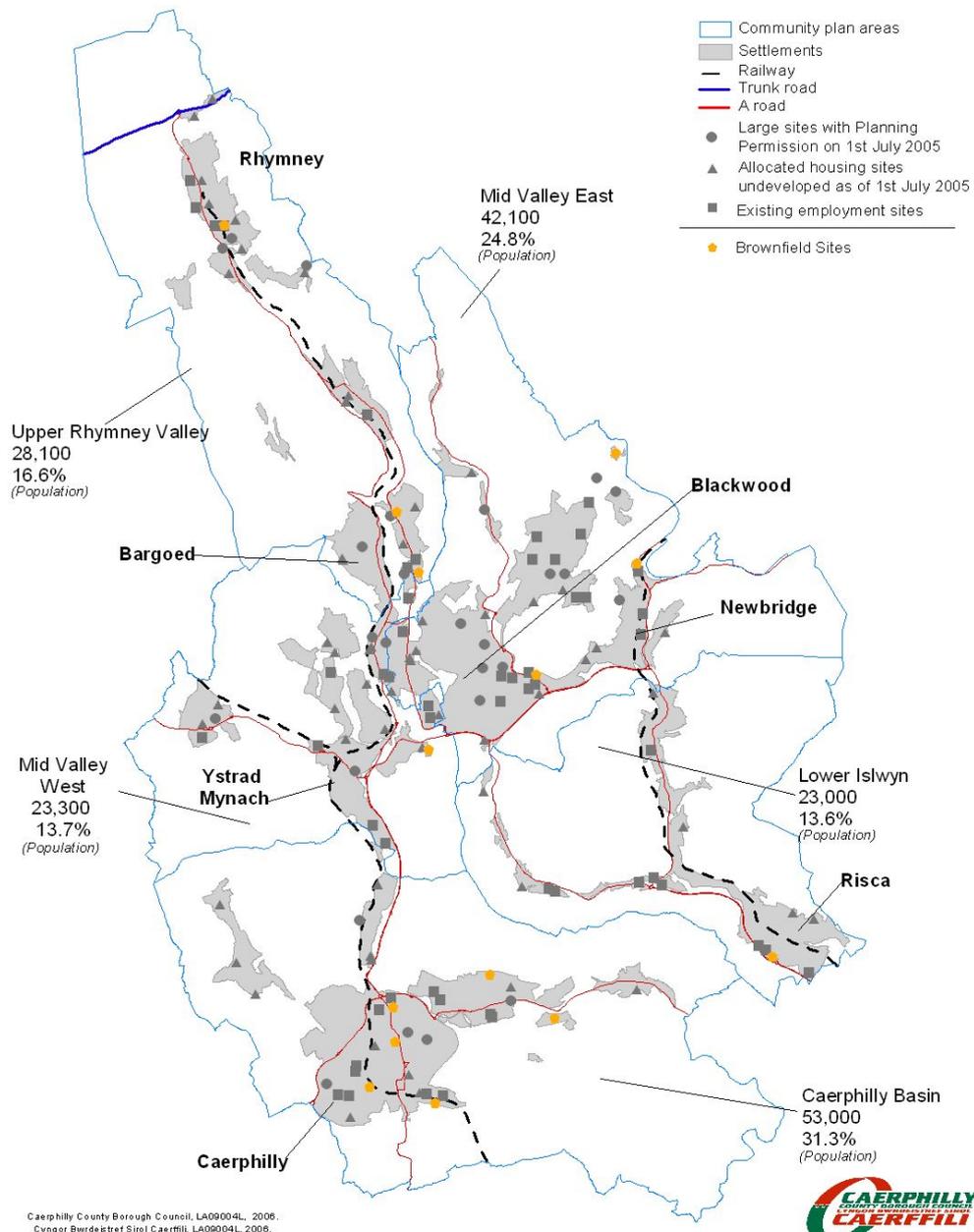
Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan



Brownfield Opportunities

2.2 There is significant potential within the county borough for development to take place on brownfield sites within existing settlements. Many of these sites would require substantial remedial work and infrastructure improvements to take place before development could be permitted. The inclusion or otherwise of these sites for development will be determined by the type of development strategy that the Council in partnership with our stakeholders pursues through the LDP.

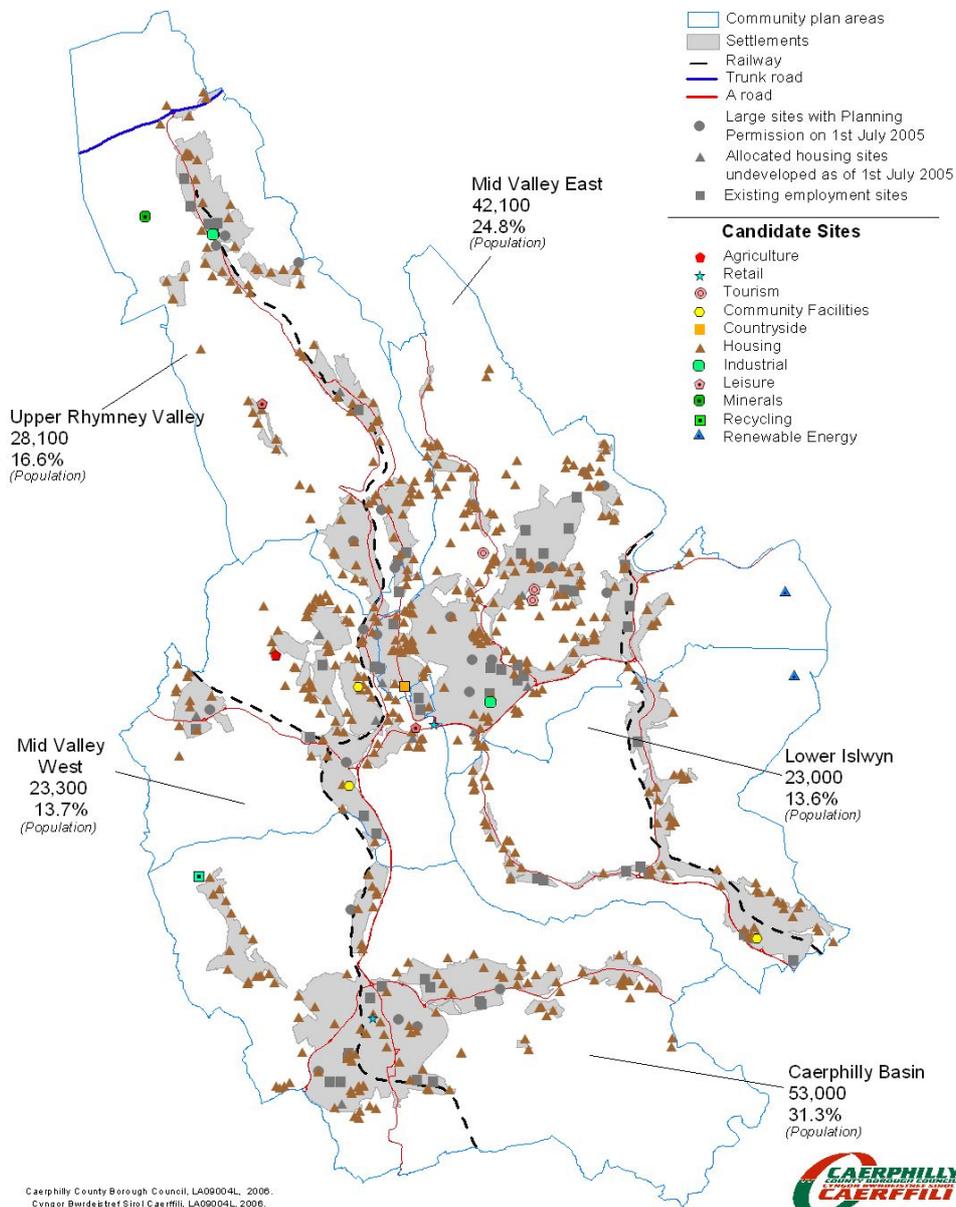
Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan



Candidate Sites

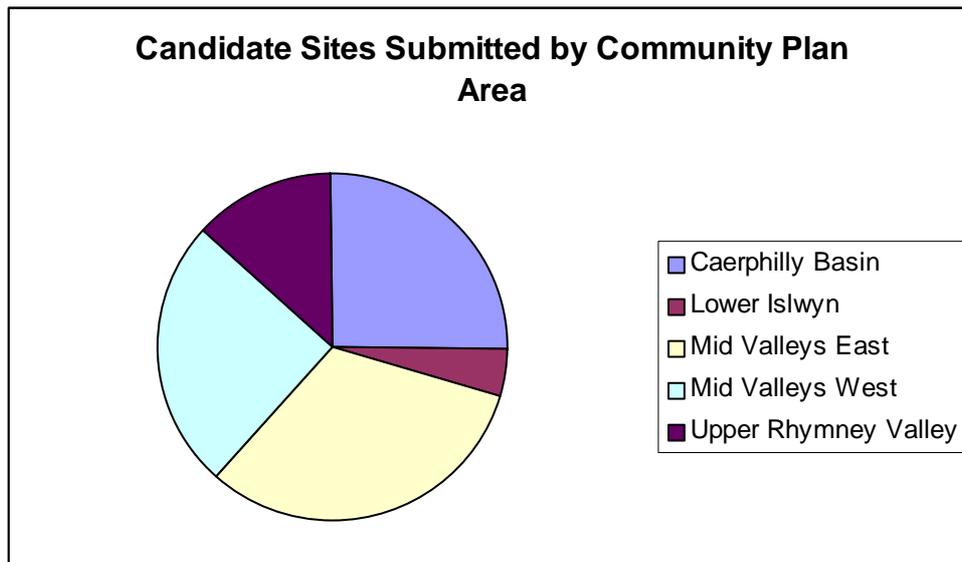
2.3 One of the key differences between the old development plan system and the new system is the need to identify sites with development potential as an integral part of the evidence base. Under the previous system it was usual for developers and landowners to submit representations in respect of new / alternative sites during the 'Deposit Period' of the plan preparation process. The new system discourages this approach and encourages LPAs to actively seek out sites for early consideration, in order to give the Council the opportunity to consider alternative sites when developing strategy options.

Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan



2.4 In order to obtain this evidence, earlier this year the Council invited interested individuals and organisations to put forward candidate sites for development.

2.5 It should be noted that not all of these sites will be suitable for development and officers are in the process of assessing them to determine their suitability or otherwise for various land uses. Once the assessment is complete a Site Register will be made available on the web site with baseline data assembled in respect of each of the sites.



SECTION 3 DEVELOPING STRATEGIC OTIONS

Vision for Caerphilly County Borough

3.1 The Council held workshops in April and May 2006 to develop a Vision Statement for the LDP to guide the development of the County Borough over the plan period. On the **27th June 2006** the Council approved the following Draft Vision Statement for the early stages of plan preparation:

The Development Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough will ensure that the needs of all the county borough's residents and visitors are met and the regeneration of our towns, villages and employment centres and the surrounding countryside is delivered in a well-balanced and sustainable manner

Strategic Options

3.2 Outlined below are three Strategic Options that emerge from work undertaken to date. In order to aid discussion and to provide a useful indication of what each of the options could mean in terms of actual development on the ground a Map is provided for each option. The Map indicates the spatial distribution of:

- the existing land bank of housing and employment sites;
- known brownfield opportunities where they are applicable to the strategy; and
- candidate sites that could potentially contribute to the strategy.

Note: The community plan boundary of the Upper Rhymney Valley (URV) Area has been amended to coincide with the Heads of the Valleys boundary. In this respect for the purpose of this analysis Bargoed is included in the URV and not in Mid Valleys West.

OPTION A: CONTINUATION OF UDP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- a) Consolidate development in the south of the county borough within existing settlements
- b) Allow for the redevelopment of large brownfield sites in the south for mixed use development
- c) Development to provide necessary infrastructure improvements
- d) Continue to promote growth in the Mid Valleys Corridor
- e) Release of greenfield sites in the Mid Valleys Corridor to allow for additional growth
- f) Allow for development opportunities in the North and in the Aber Valley
- g) Continue previous growth pattern

Figure 2a: Chart to indicate the Candidate sites in each Community Plan Area that could contribute to the continuation of the UDP Strategy.

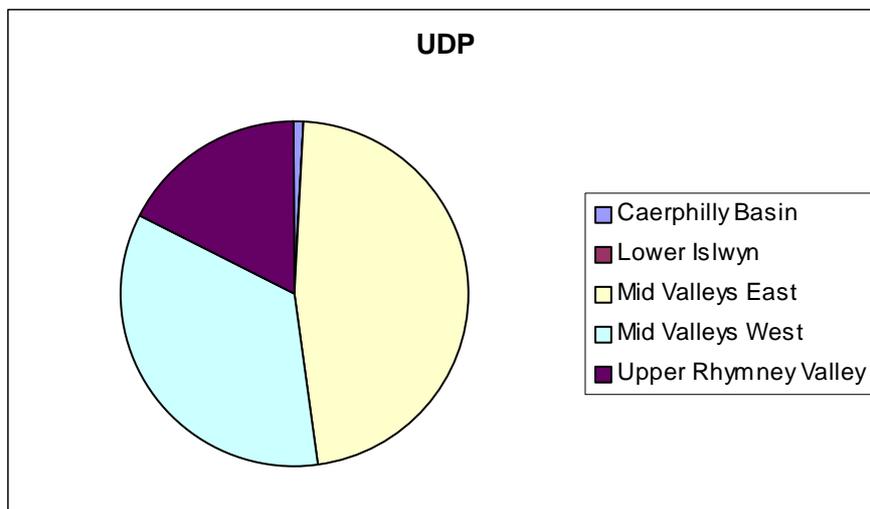
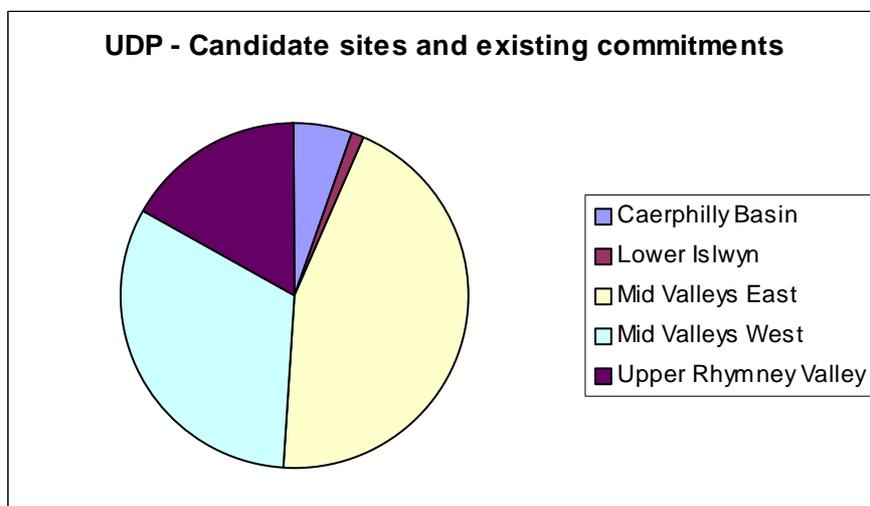
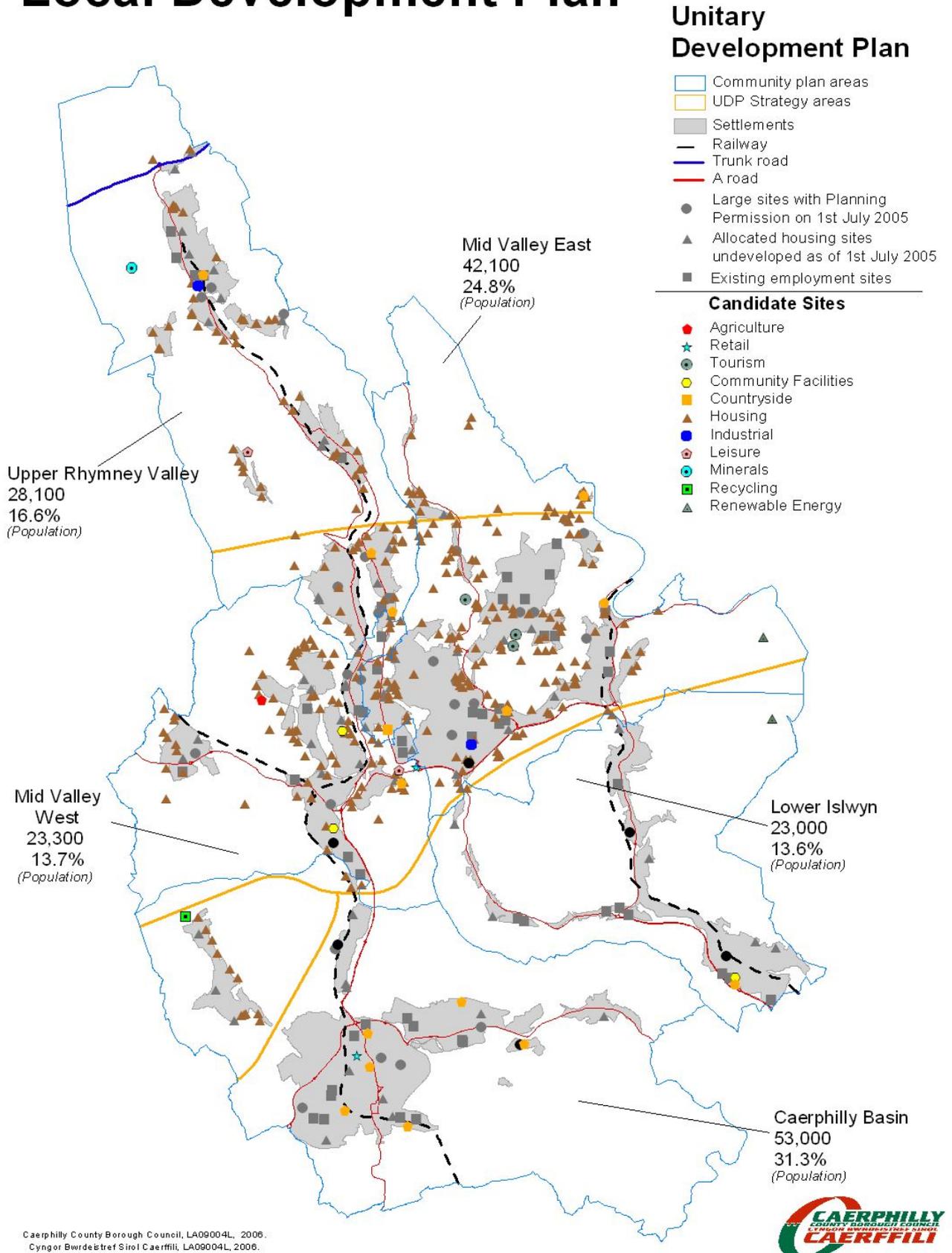


Figure 2b: Chart to indicate the Candidate sites, Existing Commitments and Brownfield Opportunities in each Community Plan Area that could contribute to the continuation of the UDP Strategy.



Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan



OPTION B: URBAN CONTAINMENT STRATEGY

- a) Exploit brownfield opportunities
- b) Allow for growth in areas where brownfield sites are available
- c) Reduce impact of development on the countryside.
- d) Reduce the need to find new sites for development to accommodate future growth.
- e) Sustain existing service provision.
- f) Development to provide necessary infrastructure improvements

Figure 1a: Chart to indicate the Candidate sites in each Community Plan Area that could contribute to an Urban Containment Strategy.

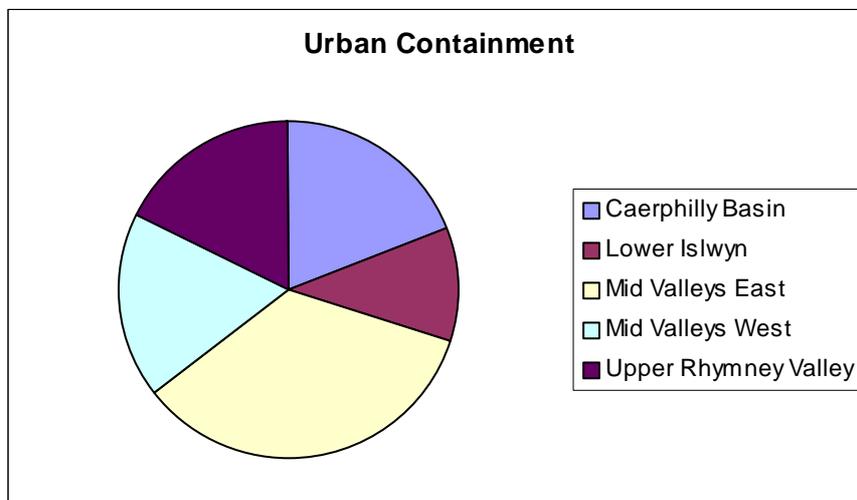
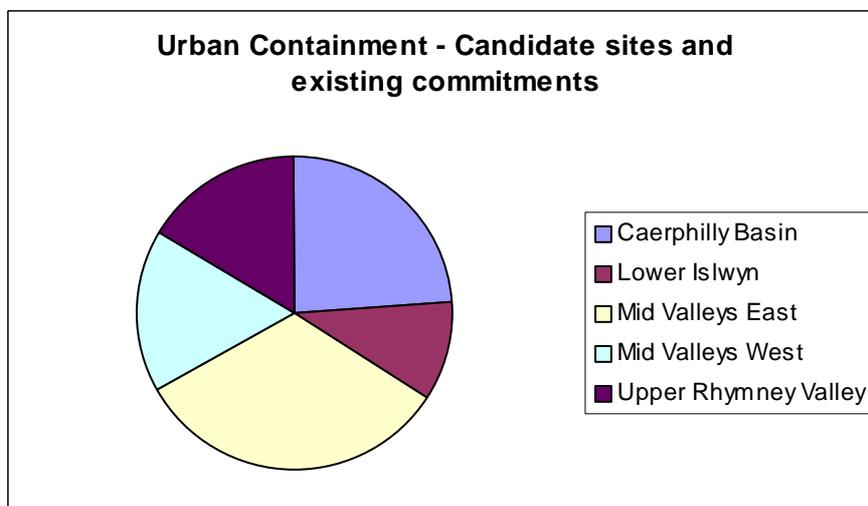
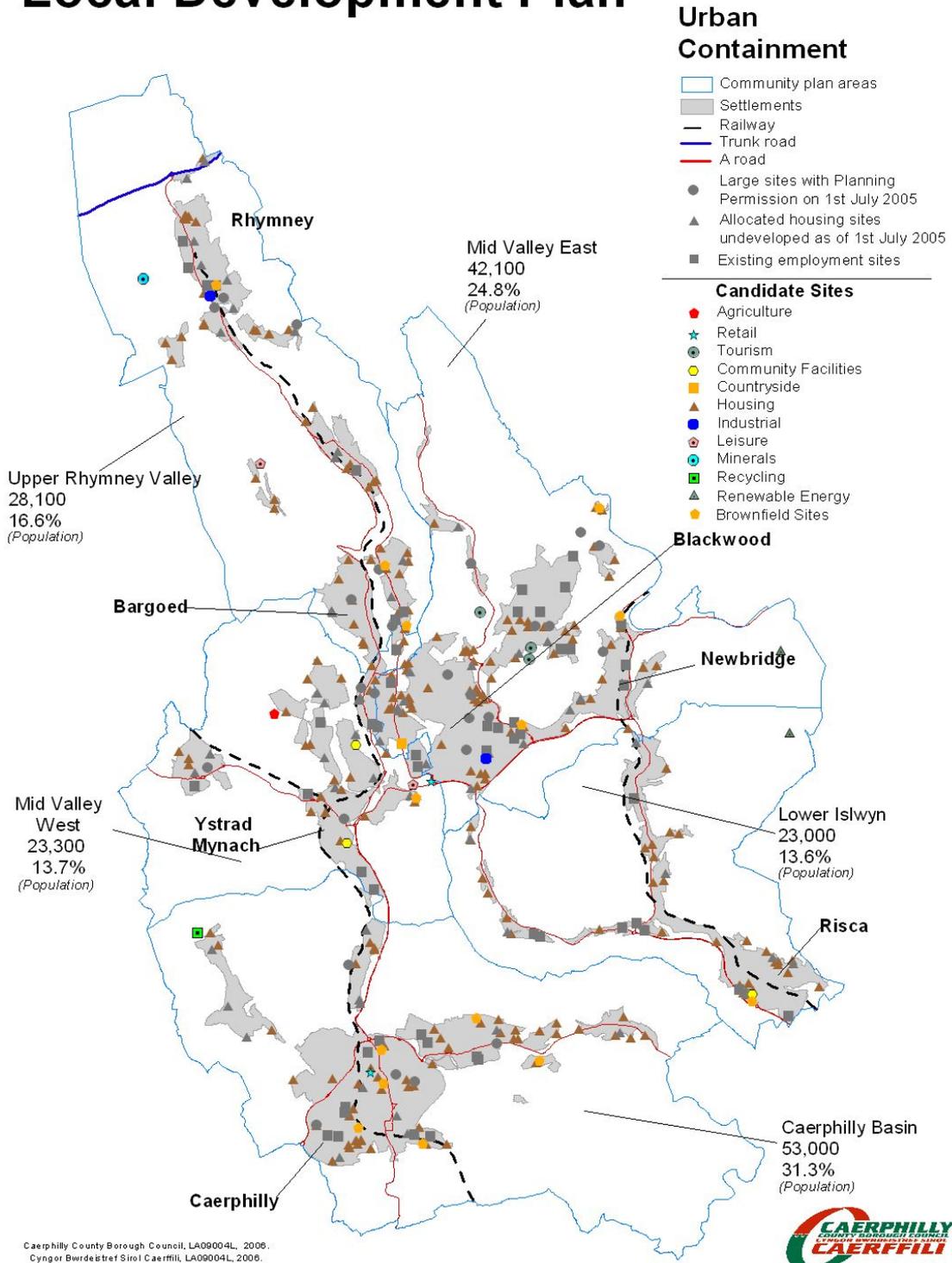


Figure 1b: Chart to indicate the Candidate sites, Existing Commitments and Brownfield Opportunities in each Community Plan Area that could contribute to an Urban Containment Strategy.



Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan



OPTION C: SUSTAINABLE GROWTH STRATEGY

- a) Emphasis on key locations near transport routes
- b) Target new development to support threatened services
- c) Expanded settlements
- d) Release of greenfield sites to bolster declining settlements
- e) Potential impact on the countryside
- f) Development to provide necessary infrastructure improvements
- g) Proactively targeting growth to the Mid Valley and Upper Valley Areas
- h) Prevent over heating in the Caerphilly Basin
- i) Development targeted to reflect the role and function of individual settlements

Figure 3a: Chart to indicate the Candidate sites in each Community Plan Area that could contribute to an Urban Containment Strategy.

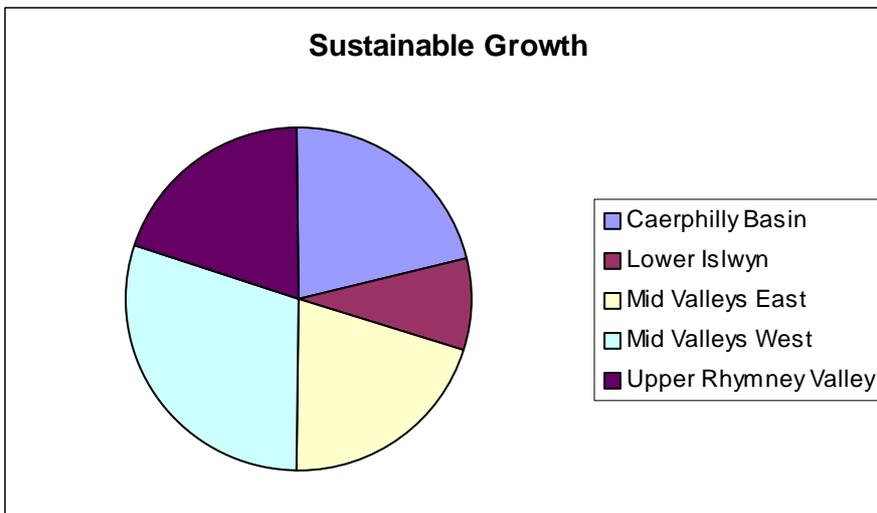
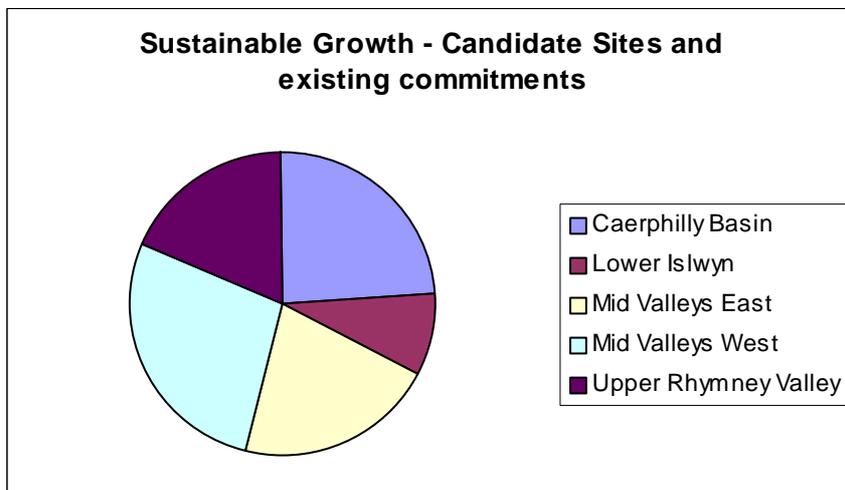
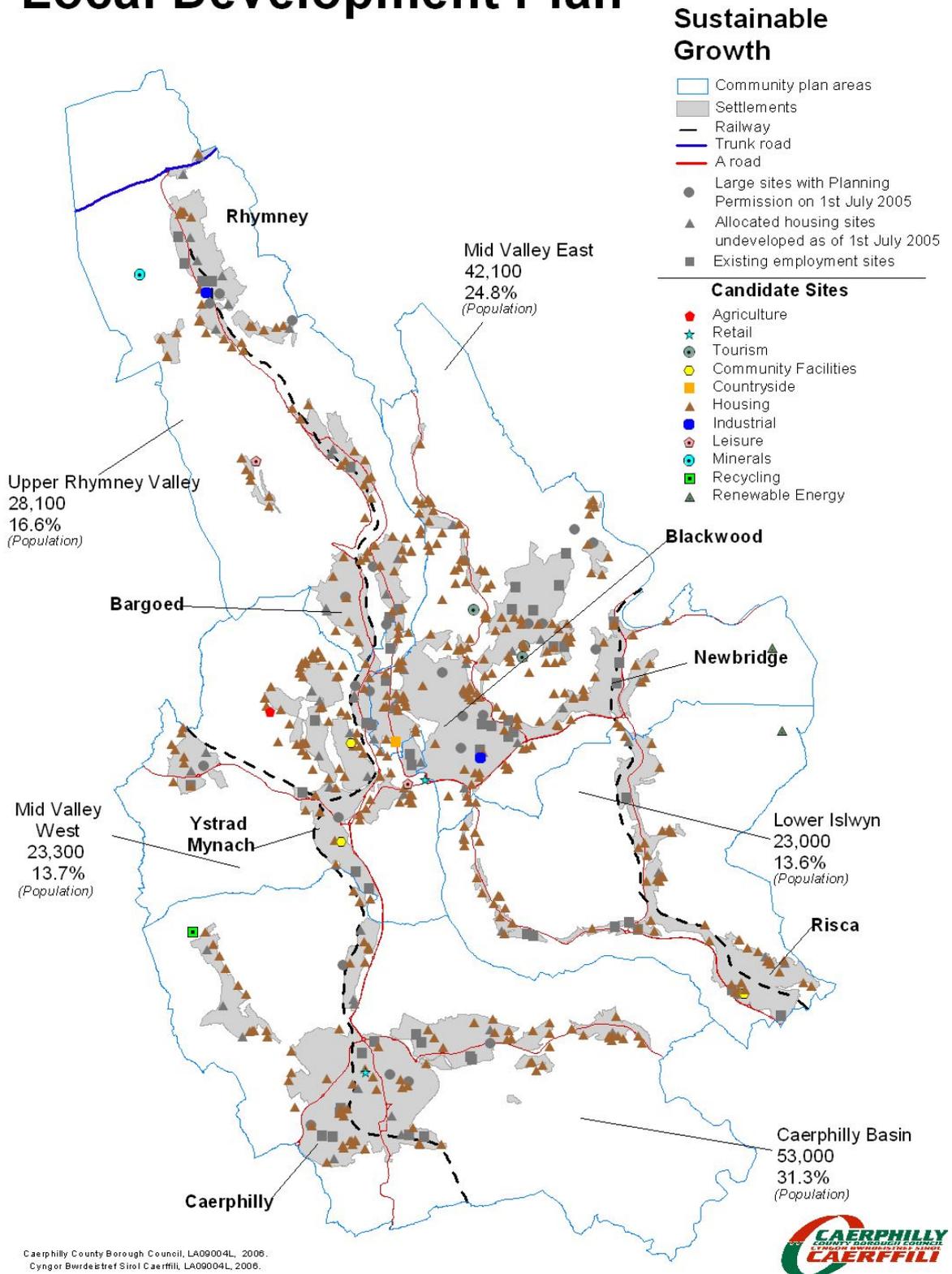


Figure 3b: Chart to indicate the Candidate sites, Existing Commitments and Brownfield Opportunities in each Community Plan Area that could contribute to an Sustainable Growth Strategy.



Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan



SECTION 4 FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

4.1 As an integral part of plan preparation the Council is required to devise a settlement strategy for the County Borough. In order to facilitate this work the Planning Division has undertaken a functional analysis of the five Community Plan Areas. namely, the:

1. Upper Rhymney Valley – incorporating Bargoed
2. Mid Valleys West
3. Mid Valleys East
4. Lower Sirhowy Valley and
5. Caerphilly Basin

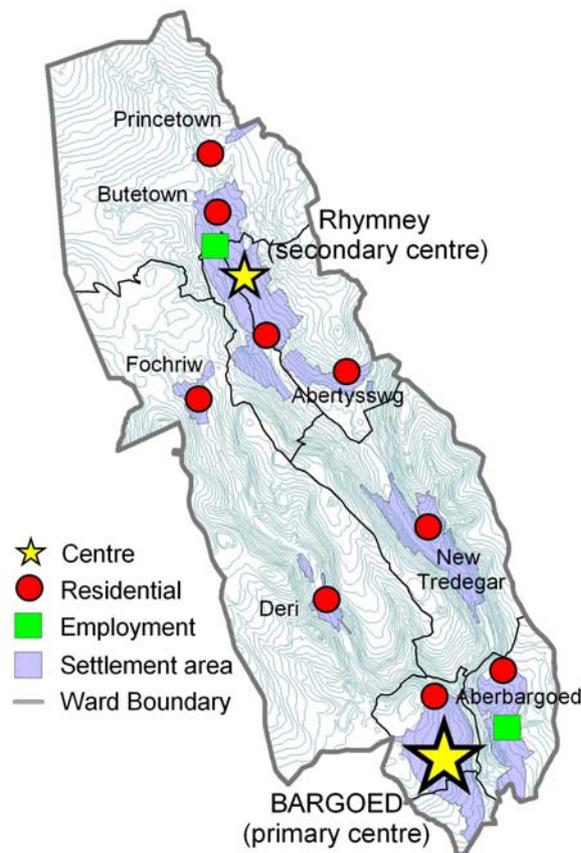
The following section provides this analysis.

4a Upper Rhymney Valley (incorporating Bargoed)

1. Overview

1.1 The Upper Rhymney Valley had a population of 28,111 in 2001 – a decrease of 8.2% since 1991. It comprises a cluster of relatively small former mining settlements along the line of the River Rhymney and its tributary, the Nant Bargoed Rhymney. The Valley sides are generally very steep but broaden out at the Heads of the Valleys into a rather bleak plateau. The area is among the most deprived in Europe – all nine wards in the district are Community First wards.

2. Main Settlements – Roles & Functions 2006



2.1 **Hub; BARGOED** is the hub of this district. It is the largest town in the district with a population, including the suburb of **Gilfach**, of 8,300. It contains the only significant shopping centre with over 100 commercial units, although no major supermarket, a comprehensive school and swimming pool and a range of minor urban services.

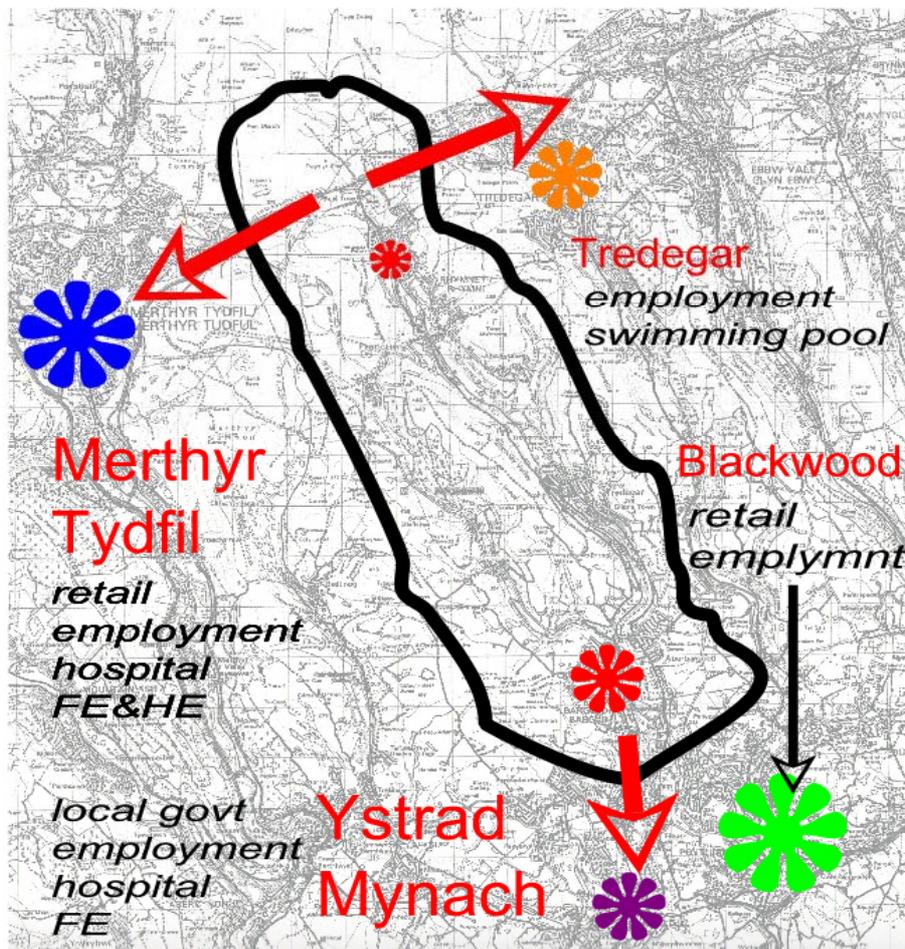
2.2 Secondary Centre; RHYMNEY is the second largest town with a population of around 5,500. Its comprehensive school, further education college, community hospital and discount supermarket give it the potential to be a secondary centre for the villages in the northern part of the district.

2.3 Residential areas; NEW TREDEGAR (itself a cluster of five distinct settlements) **ABERBARGOED, DERI, FOCHRIW, PONTLOTTYN, ABERTYSSWG** and a number of small hamlets are predominantly residential villages. Some have tourism potential.

2.4 There are three large **industrial estates** - Heads of the Valleys, Capital Valley and Maerdy - located in the vicinity of the settlements of **Rhymney** and **Pontlottyn** (a total of 45.4 Ha of land). In addition, there is an industrial estate south of **Aberbargoed** (18 Ha of land), and a new development of small workshops in New Tredegar. These industrial sites emphasise the role of the Upper Rhymney Valley for employment uses, especially as only 4% of land in this area is currently vacant (Caerphilly Employment Sites Supply and Market Appraisal Study, 2006).

2.5 NEW TREDEGAR is an exemplar of comprehensive regeneration. Over the past two years a mutually supporting set of initiatives, including a new community school, new road, incubator industrial units, environmental improvements, engineering works to river retaining structures and a comprehensive safe routes to school footpath network including two major footbridges, has been implemented in a £20m + package financed from a number of sources.

3. External linkages



UPPER RHYMNEY VALLEY SUB REGIONAL CONTEXT

3.1 **South.** The A469 is the main road route south to **Ystrad Mynach** (location of Caerphilly council offices, Further Education College, proposed new general hospital, employment sites). The Rhymney Valley railway line connects Rhymney, Pontlottyn, New Tredegar, Bargoed and Gilfach to **Ystrad Mynach, Caerphilly** and the national and regional centre of **Cardiff**. There is an hourly train service from Rhymney to Cardiff, with a more frequent 15 min service from Bargoed to Cardiff. There are also regular bus links to Ystrad Mynach.

3.2 North-West. The A465 links the district to employment opportunities along the A465 corridor and to the Sub-regional centre of **Merthyr Tydfil** (shopping and current general hospital). Merthyr can also be accessed by a minor road from Fochriw. A bus service operates from Bargoed to Merthyr Tydfil via Rhymney.

3.3 North-East. The upgraded dual carriageway section of the A465 connects the district to employment opportunities along the A465 corridor and the historic town of **Tredegar** with its leisure centre and swimming pool. A sub standard minor road from Abertysswg provides an alternative access to Tredegar. There is a bus route to Tredegar from Bargoed and an hourly bus service linking Tredegar to Rhymney Station.

3.4 South-East A poor network of minor roads leads to the sub-regional shopping centre and major employment centres around **Blackwood**. There is, however, a regular bus from New Tredegar and Bargoed to Blackwood.

3.5 There are no direct road or rail links to the **North**, where the county borough borders the Brecon Beacons National Park.

4. Tourism potential

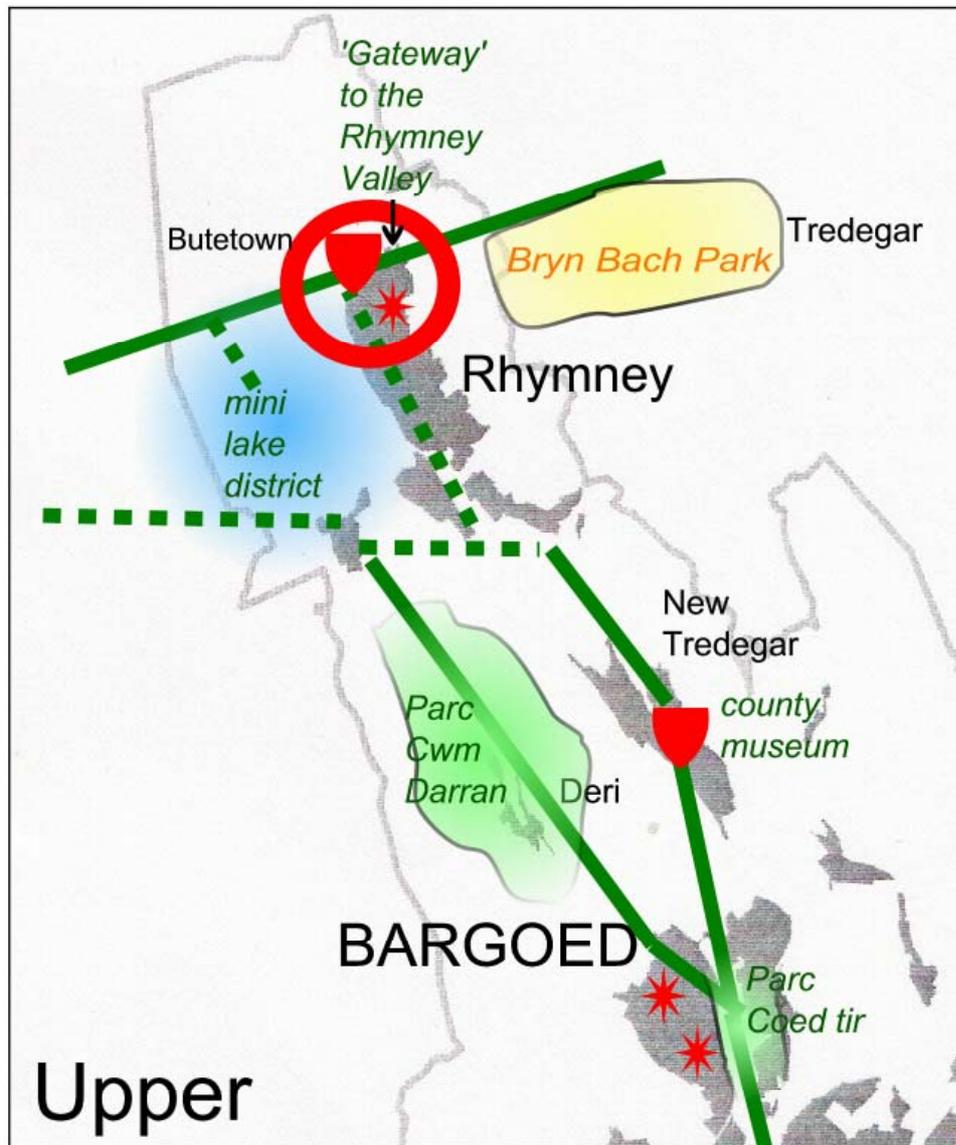
4.1 The area has the potential to make a major contribution to the VALLEYS REGIONAL PARK.

4.2 Landscape; The hillsides are dramatic and magnificent views are obtained from the minor roads and long distance footpaths along the ridgeways. Most of the countryside is common land , including the extensive and historic landscape of **Gelligaer Common**. The northern part of the area contains a number of small lakes and reservoirs, including Parc Cwm Darran lakes, Rhaslas pond, Butetown reservoir and Jepsens pond.

4.3 Country Parks; there are two major Country parks at **Cwm Darran** (Deri and Fochriw) and **Parc Coedtir** (Bargoed-Aberbargoed); Bryn Bach Park lies just across the border in Blaenau Gwent.

4.4 Cyclepaths; the **east-west cyclepath** from Merthyr to Tredegar passes through the historic hamlet of Butetown and leads to Bryn Bach Park. A **north-south cyclepath** runs through

Parc Coedtir and up to Abertysswg and another cyclepath connects Bargoed through Deri to Parc Cwm Darran.



Upper
Rhymney
Valley
Tourism

- cyclepath
- - - cyclepath (missing links)
- ★ hotel

4.5 **Heritage;** Butetown (Welsh 'Drenewydd') is a Nineteenth century 'model' settlement, dating from around 1835. It contains 44 listed buildings. The county borough museum is being constructed

in the former mining village of New Tredegar. Roman and prehistoric remains are found on Gelligaer Common - a designated 'historic landscape'.

4.6 Events; Bargoed is seeking to establish a regular annual fair in its large urban park at Heolddu. This year the event was entitled **Bargoed Big Bed**. The annual British **Giant Vegetable Competition** at Abertysswg may have some tourism potential if marketed imaginatively.

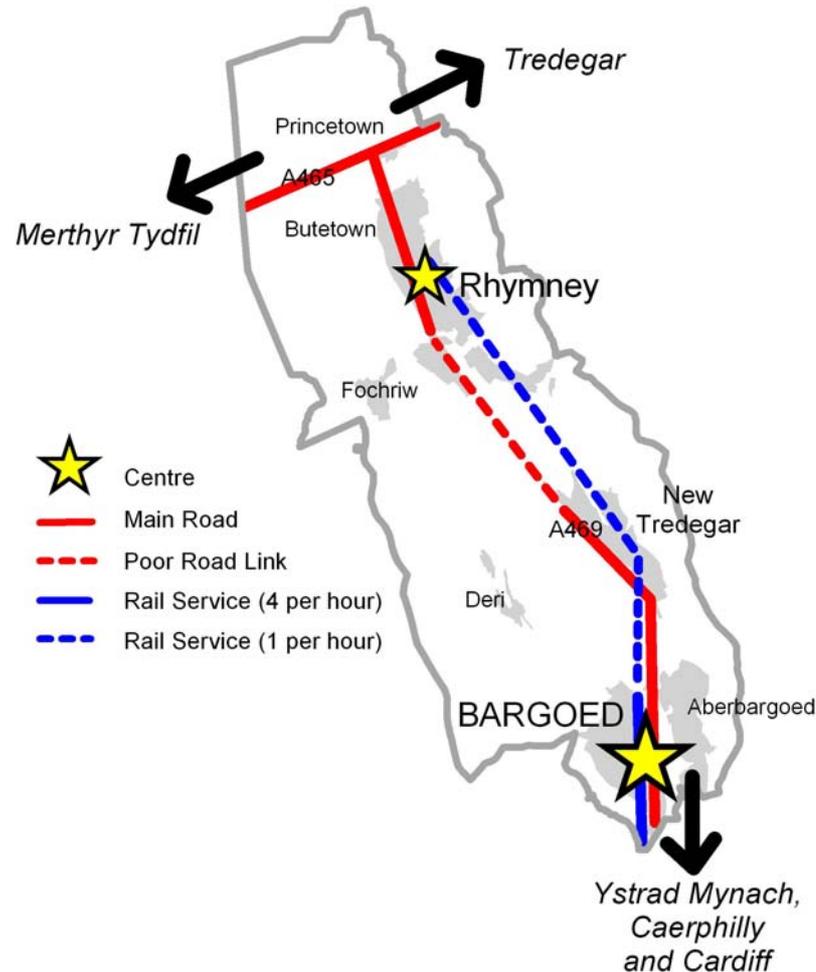
4.7 Accommodation; Bargoed and Rhymney have small hotels and there is a campsite at Parc Cwm Darran.

5. Analysis

In order for the urban cluster to function effectively the following issues need to be addressed in this district:

- New shops and commercial businesses need to be developed in the district's main centre at Bargoed. Attracting a major food retail 'anchor store' is a fundamental requirement.
- The formal Leisure offer also needs to be developed. Bargoed's swimming pool is 30 years old and only available to the public at weekends and evenings. There is no cinema or theatre or 'family' pub/restaurants.
- The further education facilities at the secondary centre of Rhymney could be expanded further if this were compatible with developments in further education elsewhere in the Heads of Valleys sub region.
- Railway services are infrequent and need to be increased, especially between Rhymney and Bargoed.
- Road links will be improved with the construction of Angel Way (Bargoed relief road) in 2006-08 but the A469 between New Tredegar and Pontllytyn is poor and acts as a fundamental constraint on the proper functioning of the district, deterring movement between the hub at Bargoed and the settlements to the north. With the scheduled opening of a new general hospital for the county borough to the south at Ystrad Mynach, the need for improvement to this section of the A469 will become even more acute.

- Road links are also poor between the district and the developing employment opportunities north of Blackwood, restricting the ability of the large numbers of unemployed and economically inactive in this area to access the growing employment opportunities along the mid valleys corridor.



- The surrounding attractive and accessible countryside provides a very positive environmental setting and the smaller settlements could provide desirable residential locations if the choice of housing they offer were not so limited. Most of the current housing stock is council rented or 19th century terraced and there is a need to develop a wider choice of modern housing in most of the settlements in order to retain and attract people to bring a halt to the rapid population decline of recent decades.
- The east-west and north-south cyclepaths need to be connected to each other and to the cyclepath network to the south in order to form an effective part of the regional network.

- The rather bleak ‘mini-lake district’ in the north of the district, between Rhymney and Fochriw has been identified for a strategic landscaping initiative that should greatly enhance the potential of that part of the district to function as a pleasant residential area and visitor destination.

The historic hamlet of Butetown is located just off the junction of the A469 and the improved A465 heads of the Valleys Road. It has the potential to become the centrepiece of a landscaped ‘gateway’ to the Rhymney Valley from the north.

In order to function as part of the *South East Wales integrated city region*, the following issues need to be addressed:

- The district’s potential contribution to the Valleys Regional Park needs to be fully exploited.
-
- Existing residential areas need to be made more attractive and new residential sites identified in order to halt net migration outflow from the heads of the Valleys
- The rail service to Cardiff should be improved and in particular a greater frequency of service provided, particularly from Rhymney
- The A469 through this district needs to be substantially improved to facilitate access to employment facilities and services in the Mid Valleys corridor.
- Transport links to the Oakdale/Blackwood sub-region need to be improved to provide access to jobs.

6. Functions of Settlements and Future Opportunities

BARGOED

6.1 As the main town in the area, Bargoed provides a range of functions and services and its position on the Rhymney Valley railway link is important in maintaining links to the Upper Rhymney Valley to the north and Ystrad Mynach, Caerphilly and Cardiff in the south. However, Bargoed cannot offer the range of goods and services that Caerphilly or Cardiff can offer and its good rail links may also result in a loss of local trade due to the relative ease of accessing larger towns.

6.2 The proposed town centre regeneration scheme, in addition to the town bypass, Angel Way, has the potential to expand the town functions and increase the sphere of influence, encouraging people in the Upper Rhymney Valley who may currently use Merthyr Tydfil as their primary centre to shop and use services within the County Borough. Whilst the town is constrained by its topography, there may be limited opportunities for new residential and office development, supported by the new transport links, particularly on the Bargoed plateau.

GILFACH

6.3 Gilfach is a small residential area directly south of Bargoed, which has coalesced with the town. It has a small number of local shops on Commercial Street, but is subservient to the role of Bargoed. There is some limited opportunity for residential development, although its role is likely to remain as a southern extension to Bargoed.

ABERBARGOED

6.4 Aberbargoed's function is as an employment and residential location, with a range of businesses located on industrial estates to the south of the settlement. Since the development of the plateau and removal of the spoil tip, the town has a better relationship with neighbouring Bargoed but poor road links between the two is a current constraint, which will be alleviated by the Angel Way bypass. Aberbargoed has the capacity to accommodate some additional housing through opportunities created by the road.

6.5 There has been a decline in community facilities in the area with the closure of Bedwellty School in 2005 and the proposed closure of Aberbargoed hospital due to the new hospital development in Ystrad Mynach, so the town's role as a facility provider is declining. Better connections between Bargoed and Aberbargoed, and the improved road network may reduce the impact of this.

NEW TREDEGAR

6.6 The urban area of New Tredegar comprises five distinct settlements, namely Tirphil, Brithdir, Elliotstown, Philipstown and New Tredegar, with each village characterised by terraced housing constrained by the steep topography. Major regeneration has

occurred in recent years through the development of an innovative community school, new doctor's surgery, workshop units and road bypassing the centre, and it is important that this regeneration work is continued in order to encourage new residential development to increase the mix of housing types in the area.

6.7 To date much of the investment has occurred on the Valley floor with little investment in the steepest locations such as Philipstown. It will be important to extend investment to these areas.

DERI AND GROESFAEN

6.8 The village of Deri, and the small hamlet of Groesfaen directly south of Deri are predominately residential areas located in the Darran Valley. The settlements are isolated due to the steep topography and poor road links to the closest major town of Bargoed, but there has been limited self-build residential development, which has increased the mix of dwelling types in the area and could be continued in the future if appropriate sites are identified. Deri also has an important tourism role due to its position directly south of Parc Cwm Darran and there is the potential to expand this role in the future

FOCHRIW

6.9 At the northern end of the Darren Valley, Fochriw is a remote settlement with poor links to any other settlements in the County Borough. There is great potential for further development in the area subject to the LDP Strategy as it does not have the topographical constraints of other settlements in the Upper Rhymney Valley, but its isolated position means that there is likely only to be limited demand for additional development. The area could expand on its tourism role due to its location north of Parc Cwm Darran.

6.10 Due to the close proximity to Merthyr Tydfil and the separation of the village from the Rhymney Valley, there is a strong relationship to areas outside the County Borough, which is unlikely to change due to the physical boundaries.

RHYMNEY

6.11 As the northern-most town in the County Borough with close proximity to the A465, Rhymney has an important role within the Upper Rhymney Valley. The town has an important educational

role due to the location of Rhymney College, part of Ystrad Mynach College, offering important training opportunities to the Upper Rhymney Valley.

6.12 Rhymney also has an important employment function, with the town providing a large area of employment land across three sites. Capital Valley and Heads of the Valleys Industrial estates are car-dependent and therefore limit their relationship to Rhymney itself, an area characterised by low car ownership. However, proposals to regenerate the town may provide opportunities for improve the character of the area and increase connections to employment opportunities.

6.13 Whilst there have been a number of self-build developments in the town, Rhymney is characterised by high levels of public sector housing, and further investments in the mix of housing would be necessary to increase the role of the centre.

BUTETOWN

6.14 As a conservation area comprising three rows of terraced housing, the small village of Butetown has little residential potential, although the Drenewydd museum offers tourism potential.

PRINCETOWN / LLECHYRD

6.15 The small villages of Llechryd and Princetown to the north of Rhymney on the A465 function as residential settlements offering a range of different housing types. Llechryd offers some potential for additional housing depending on the LDP Strategy due to its flat plateau location. Due to its location north of the A465 and the fact that the village is split between Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly CBC, Princetown is unconnected from Rhymney and relates more to the settlement of Tredegar than to Rhymney.

PONTLOTTYN

6.16 Whilst in close proximity to Rhymney, Pontlottyn maintains its own identity offering several retail units and a train station. It comprises mostly terraced housing, although larger executive housing is developing to the north of the village. The village is constrained by the A469 but has some potential on the western hillside if there is demand and subject to the strategy.

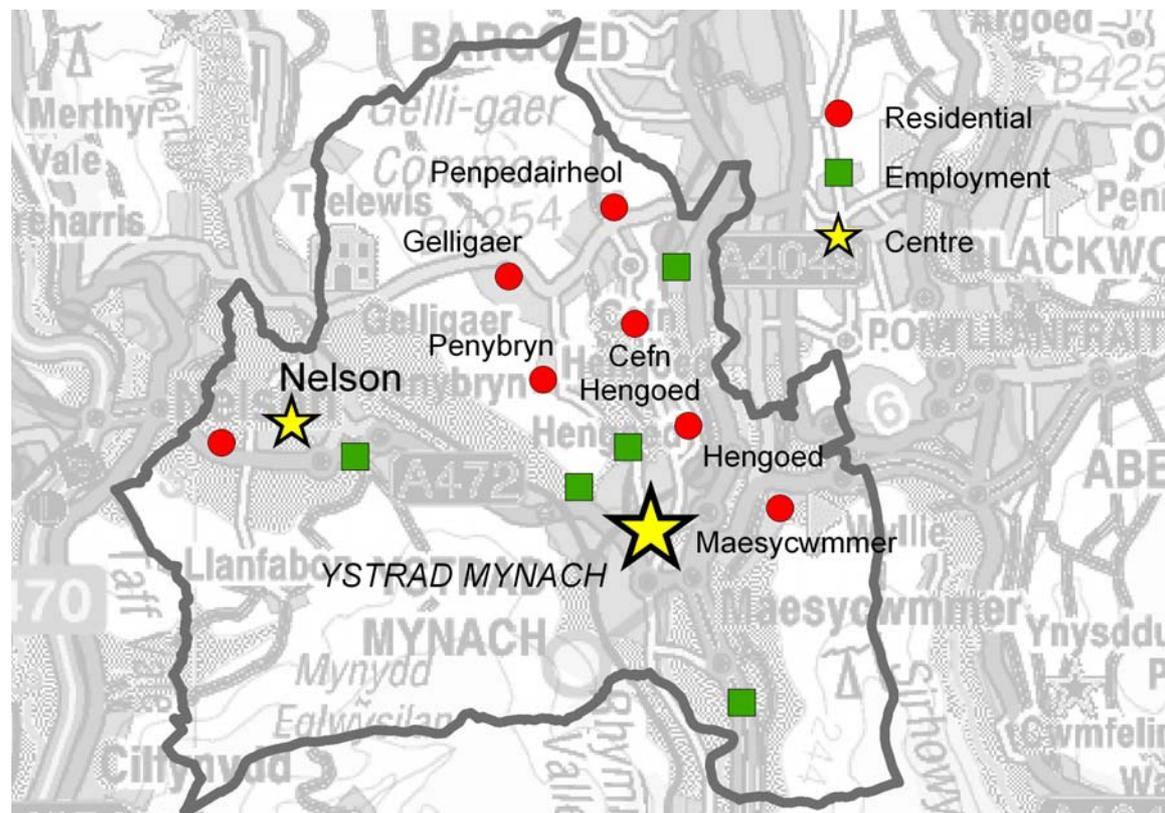
ABERTYSSWG

6.17 Abertysswg is a linear residential settlement south east of Rhymney comprising mainly terraced housing. Due to the topography there is only limited opportunity for further development, although there is a need for a mix of housing types in the area. There is a clear relationship between Rhymney and Abertysswg, with Rhymney providing a number of services for the area.

4.b MID VALLEYS (WEST) DISTRICT

1. Overview

1.1 Situated around the centre of the Rhymney Valley, the Mid Valleys West district encompasses a town and several large villages – all of which have strong associations and in most cases roots in the mining industry. Altogether the population was 23,300 in 2001 (Census), a small increase on the 1991 figure of 22,000. Geographically, the district is roughly cross-shaped, with the relatively steep-sided Rhymney Valley running along a north-south axis, and an east-west gap rising to plateaux near Nelson (east) and Maescwmmmer (west). In common with the wider valleys, development has historically spread in a rather random and haphazard way along the linear valley bottoms, old railway corridors or near former coal mines. There are sizeable areas of reasonably fertile agricultural land rising to upland moors.



2. Main Settlements – Roles & Functions

2.1 **Primary centre:** Within this district, **Ystrad Mynach** is the primary settlement although not the most populous – the total, including the suburb of **Tredomen**, being 4,000. Here the main shopping provision comprises a large supermarket and over 80 other commercial units, a comprehensive school, leisure centre

and a range of minor urban services. It is a main administrative centre for the county borough as location of Caerphilly council headquarters and a main police station, together with a Further Education College and the new general hospital. In addition there are a number of employment sites.

2.2 Secondary Centre: In terms of the next most multi-functional settlement in the local hierarchy, **Nelson** has a smaller supermarket and range of small shops, with a population of around 4,500. Somewhat separate from the main district towns, it is closely related to the Treharris, Trelewis, Quaker's Yard and Abercynon belt of settlements which lie in neighbouring county boroughs.

2.3 Residential areas: Hengoed, Cefn Hengoed, Gelligaer, Penpedairheol, Penybryn and Maesycwmmmer villages are mainly residential. Some have tourism potential, particularly around nodes of historic buildings and landscapes in the area.

2.4 Industry: Main industrial sites are located south of Ystrad Mynach at **Dyffryn**, while another major site lies north of the town and Penallta Colliery. There are smaller mixed developments lining the A469 through **Tiryberth** and A472 at **Tredomen**; location of the Innovation and Technology centre.

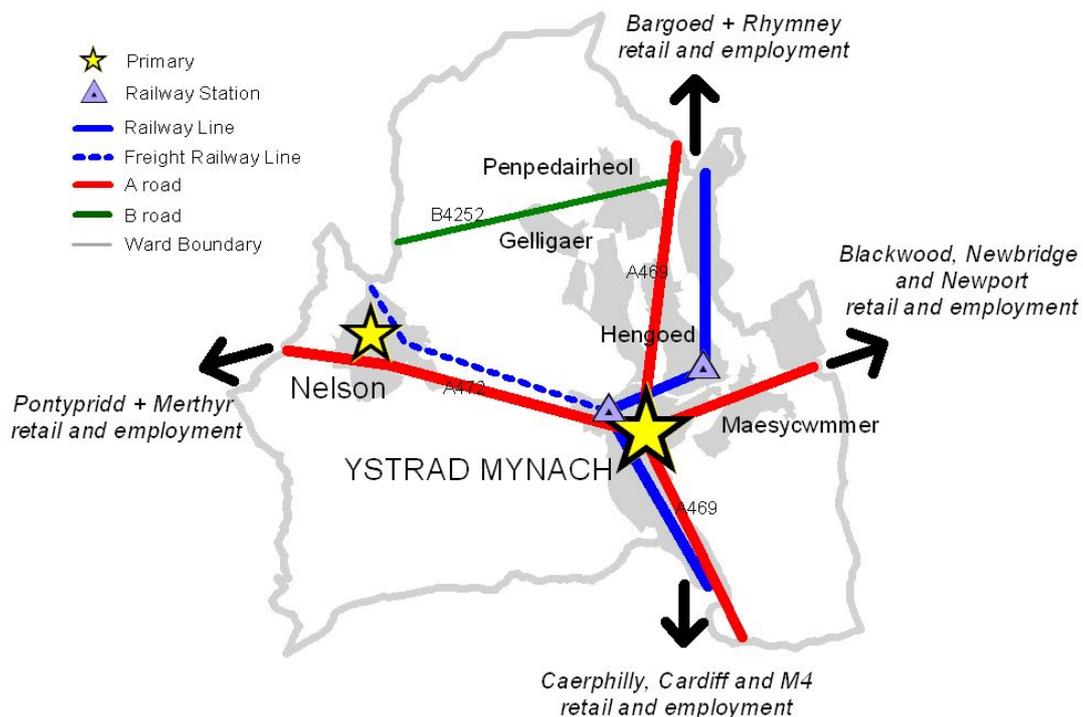
2.5 Regeneration: Penallta Colliery Redevelopment Scheme is one of the most exciting regeneration projects in the county borough, on land reclaimed since the pit's closure in 1991. Here historic mine buildings are being restored and partially converted for other uses. A pioneering new 'urban village' is to be built, incorporating the Cwm Calon housing development, a primary school, public open space and leisure facilities.

2.6 Nearby the old tips have been landscaped and an attractive Community Park laid out. This includes the impressive horse sculpture set into the hillside, and a viewing platform overlooking the valleys below.

3. External linkages

3.1 North: Much development lies along the area's main spine road (A469) which links to **Bargoed, Rhymney** and the A465 Heads of the Valleys road. Parallel to this runs the A4049 road to

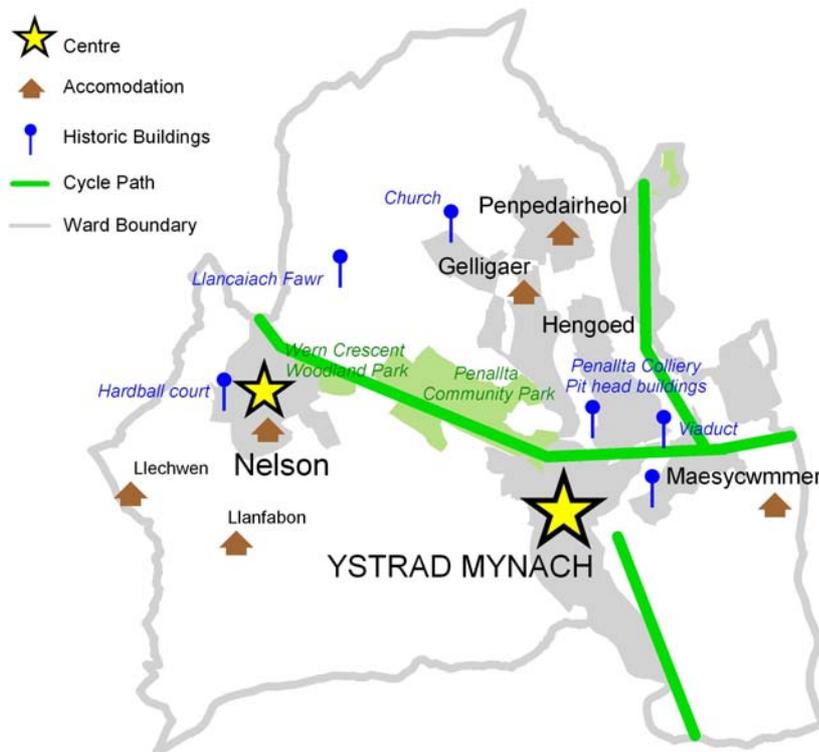
New Tredegar. The Rhymney Valley railway line extends to **Bargoed and Rhymney**.



3.2 **South:** The A469 road is the area's main route to and from **Cardiff** city running via **Caerphilly**. The Rhymney Valley railway line also connects **Caerphilly** and **Cardiff** providing a vital commuter artery.

3.3 **West:** The A472 is a major east-west route which from Ystrad Mynach continues to Nelson and eventually a junction with the main **A470 Cardiff-Merthyr** trunk route just outside the county borough at **Abercynon**.

3.4 **East:** Crossing the Rhymney Valley at Ystrad Mynach, the A472 is a single strategic link to the **Blackwood** and **Newbridge** conurbations. Whilst it bypasses these as a dual carriageway, that section within the district remains a single lane highway. It is the main route from the area to **Pontypool** and **Newport** (A467) and has links to roads serving **Ebbw Vale** (A4046) and **Brynmawr** (A467).



4. Leisure & Tourism potential

4.1 Landscape: Striking geological features such as the bowl shaped landscape at Ystrad Mynach and rock formations overlooking the Tredomen-Nelson 'vale' can be found in the area. Whilst there are a number of steep hillsides around with minor roads and long distance footpaths along the ridgeways, there are several sections of broader and gentler valley landscapes, much of which has been developed. A substantial swathe of countryside to the west of the district forms part of **Gelligaer Common**.

4.2 Country Parks: Prominently situated above the valley floors, **Penallta Community Park** features landmark sculptures and creative landscaping. Also Gelligaer Common has the potential to be a major component of the **Valleys Regional Park**. This long term project could build upon the existing network of parks in close proximity, such as the Taff Bargoed Millennium Park between Treharris and Bedlinog. At Nelson, **Wern Crescent Woodland Park** is an attractive facility with similarly high quality landscaping. The park links into the village centre and nearby sites of nature conservation importance.

4.3 Cyclepaths: A dedicated east-west cyclepath runs across the Rhymney Valley on the line of the dismantled Nelson-Pontypool railway. This forms part of the national cycle network (Route 47)

and several small schemes under a strategy called 'Loops & Links' to improve access points are in progress.

4.4 Heritage: Gelligaer Common has been designated a 'historic landscape' where the legacy of Roman and prehistoric civilisations can be found. **Gelligaer** village itself contains the 13th century **church**, whilst further west lies the well-known early 16th century manor house of **Llancaiach Fawr**. A historic sporting facility can be found at **Nelson** – the **Handball Court**.

4.5 Striding across the Rhymney valley between **Hengoed** and **Maesycwmmmer** is a substantial 19th century **viaduct**, restored for cycle/footpath use – a reminder of the industrial age when coal was transported along a once comprehensive valleys railway network. The viaduct lies near a meeting point for two long distance footpaths and **Maesycwmmmer Woollen Mill**.

4.6 Events: There are a number of entertainments held at Llancaiach Fawr Manor House shaped around a medieval theme. At present the area itself lacks a high profile flagship event, but with the nearby Caerphilly Big Cheese, Blackwood Big Balloon and Bargoed Big Bed festivals, there are a number of visitor-generating attractions close at hand.

4.7 Accommodation: At the centre of the high standard golf course at **Bryn Meadows, Maeycwmmmer**, there is a hotel and leisure club. Although there is no holiday accommodation in Ystrad Mynach itself, there are hotels and bed & breakfasts near **Nelson** (such as Llanfabon and Llechwen Hall) and **Penpedairheol**.

5. Analysis

5.1 A number of actions are required on the following issues in order for the district to fulfil its economic potential and ideally prosper;

- Dependence on centres outside its boundaries is a major factor. The main town of Ystrad Mynach is small in comparison with other commercial centres and whilst benefiting from a superb strategic location offers only a limited range of shops and services. Currently there are no facilities offering overnight accommodation in the town itself. There is poor connectivity to the larger and better-resourced

town of Blackwood, which offers an alternative to Caerphilly in terms of retail and employment opportunities.

- Population growth has been relatively slow requiring a concerted effort to arrest and reverse the long term population decline in the wider Valleys. Good all round provision of housing for the affordable, family and particularly executive sectors needs to be maintained.
- The industrial legacy continues to influence the sprawl of many settlements into virtual coalescence, without the associated benefits of improved facilities provision for clearly recognisable population centres (and thus markets).
- The road network has improved immeasurably since the opening of the A469 Llanbradach bypass and nearby A472 Pontllanfraith-Newbridge dualling. However, exacerbated by heavy traffic along this improved section to the east, the A472 road tends to become a congested bottleneck at peak times around Maesycwmmmer. This is a high priority strategic improvement.
- Reflecting the north-south geography of the Rhymney Valley, there are no clear main east-west routes other than the A472 corridor. The B4252 Pengam-Treharris road should be improved to offer an alternative route to the A470. This could be in tandem with further upgrading of the A469 linking to the Bargoed bypass.
- In relation to rail transport, the Rhymney Valley line is not a long distance route (running as far as Rhymney to the north with less frequent services from Bargoed), and with the other valley lines does not really form part of an integrated or coherent network. Achieving swifter, more regular services within the valley as well as to Cardiff is a prime target.
- There is a distinct lack of any east-west linkages whatsoever, despite significant areas of population around Ystrad Mynach (particularly to east). There are no direct connections with the new Ebbw Vale line reopening which passes through Newbridge.
- There is a shortage of leisure and entertainment facilities such as a swimming pool, cinema or bowling alley.
- Main industrial provision has traditionally been located in and around the southern environs of Ystrad Mynach. There is scope for further development within existing sites and any

moves to significantly extend here risks omitting the rare and valuable countryside breaks between the town and Llanbradach and eventually Caerphilly.

6. Future Opportunities

6.1 Ystrad Mynach: Currently the civic centre for the county borough, Ystrad Mynach needs to further promote its identity as the designated district town centre and a natural location for administrative headquarters – the hospital and police presence also here could potentially attract private sector interest. Creating a more identifiable centre requires building and enhancing Ystrad Mynach's retail and visitor accommodation (achieving provision equal to that in eastern areas of the Mid Valleys), better integrating its suburban housing hinterland and resolving flood risk issues. Also developing Ystrad Mynach's role as a major transport interchange depends upon continued growth along the whole Mid-Valleys corridor. If not reopening lines, the current rail provision could be improved on the Rhymney Valley line itself and with more regular and high profile feeder bus services.

6.2 Nelson: A strategic employment site has been allocated for industry at Ty Du, Nelson. However given the many changes since this original allocation (eg evolution of former county and district councils into an unitary authority and a shift in industrial focus), the need for such a large site in a rural setting needs to be re-examined. Recent aesthetic improvements in the village centre which contribute to Nelson's attractiveness as a sustainable shopping and residential location could be further complemented especially in view of the heritage and countryside attractions around.

6.3 Hengoed/Cefn Hengoed: Without a clearly defined centre or boundaries, these conjoined residential settlements contain severely deprived wards in the Communities First programme. As they are in any case so dependent upon Ystrad Mynach (as district centre) for shops and amenities, there may be long term benefits in integrating them into a larger and more recognisable single economic unit. There is scope for further streetworks and landscaping under the heritage theme as the conservation area extends from here to Hengoed around the viaduct. In fact the whole district's cultural identity can be based around landmarks such as this as marketing tools.

6.4 Gelligaer/Penybryn: Considerable house-building here has helped to offset any outmigration that might have been expected following the collapse of the coal industry. Proximity to the dramatic countryside of the common and the historic core need to be capitalised upon with development restricted to high quality schemes that consolidate the residential function. These villages would be more sustainable with better public transport links to shopping and business centres, particularly Ystrad Mynach, and the community/leisure facilities to be provided at the new Penallta urban village. The pit head complex at Penallta Colliery is another iconic image to be promoted.

6.5 Penpedairheol: Any distinct identity this village may have had has been eroded somewhat by the location of an industrial estate on its southern boundary. More so than other surrounding settlements, the focus for retail and general amenities tends to be towards Bargoed (to which it is nearer than Ystrad Mynach). Hence facilitating quick, regular public transport links here (as well as Ystrad Mynach) as an alternative to car use is important in such a housing dominated area by improving the B4252 and A469 roads for example.

6.6 Maesycwmmmer: Again this is a dormitory residential settlement serving the Blackwood conurbation as well as Ystrad Mynach. There are small shops here but linkages with Ystrad Mynach should be strengthened especially with the opening of the viaduct providing a pedestrian link. The good work of installing public artwork reflecting the conservation area status of part of the village should be supported by streetworks and landscaping to highlight this central design theme.

4.c MID VALLEYS EAST

1 Overview

1.1 The Mid Valleys East district can be found in the north of the former Islwyn Borough, West Gwent. The area stretches from Pentwynmawr in the south, Markham in the north, Hafodyrynys in the east and Fleur de Lys in the west.

1.2 The district has an area of 57 square kilometres and embraces the valleys and adjacent uplands of the Rivers Ebbw and Sirhowy. As of April 2001 the district has a population of approximately 42,000 which is concentrated around the main urban centres of Blackwood and Newbridge.

1.3 Over 70% of the district is undeveloped and is used mainly for agriculture and forestry. These activities have created a distinctive landscape and an attractive environment. Successive land reclamation schemes have further enhanced the area. The district is characterised by small rural villages to the north and larger residential areas to the south.

2. Main Settlements – Roles & Functions

2.1 **BLACKWOOD** is the primary settlement within the Mid Valleys East district and is the second largest within Caerphilly Borough as a whole, with a population of 23,000 (as of 2006). The town functions as a sub-regional centre, containing 183 class 'A' units, together with a variety of leisure and community facilities serving a larger catchment area (including Argoed, Cefn-Fforest, Penmaen, Pengam, and Pontllanfraith). The High Street is relatively vibrant and is the focus of retail and services within the mid-valleys corridor.

2.2 Although Blackwood provides the primary town centre in the mid-valleys corridor its potential is hindered by poor access to the northern aspects of the county borough and the heads of the valleys due to the topography of the area.

2.3 **Secondary Centre: NEWBRIDGE** is the second largest town within the Mid Valleys East district, with a population of around 6,000. It comprises a small town centre serving local needs. The town serves an important role in providing leisure and community facilities, particularly Newbridge Leisure Centre, Newbridge Rugby,

Football Club Ground, Bowling Green, and the Comprehensive School.

2.4 Newbridge benefits from a strategic location along the A469 transport corridor. By virtue of this location it relates to other towns and villages along this route rather than settlements within the community plan area to the west.

2.5 Both **Blackwood** and **Newbridge** are currently the focus of town centre enhancement schemes in which the emphasis is to improve the quality of the town centre environment and strengthen their existing roles within the area.

2.6 **Residential Areas: CEFN FFOREST, CROESPENMAEN, CRUMLIN, OAKDALE, PENTWYNMAWR, PONTLLANFRAITH and TRINANT** are the predominant residential areas supporting the larger feeder towns of the district. A diversity of housing types can be found in most settlements with the exception of smaller homes attractive to younger professionals and first time buyers. The diversification of house tenures may provide an opportunity to reverse the trends of outward migration by attracting more young professionals and first time buyers to the area.

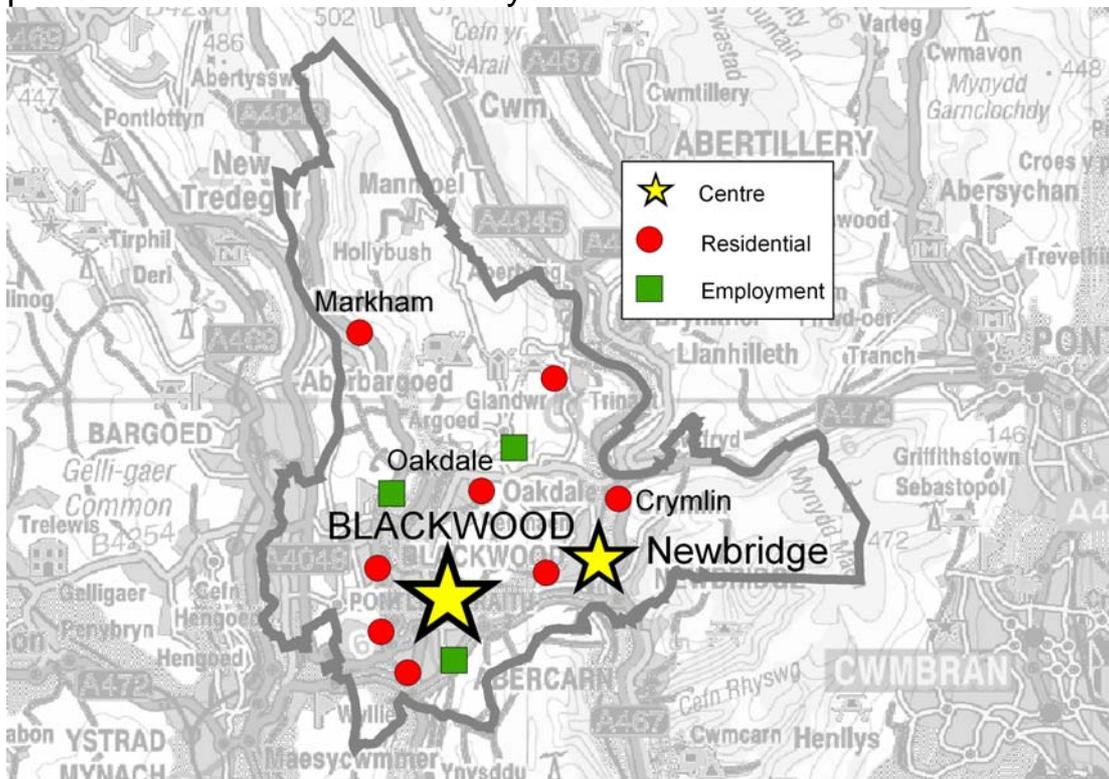


Figure 1

2.7 Employment Sites: Oakdale and Penyfan serve a dual purpose, functioning as key employment sites within the community plan area. Access to these sites has been significantly improved from the south with the opening of the Sirhowy Enterprise Way. Woodfieldside and Springfield business parks also provide subsidiary employment sites within the area.

2.8 Figure 1 Identifies the primary town centres, residential and employment sites within the Mid Valleys East Community Plan Area.

3 External Linkages

3.1 North / South: The district benefits from strong southward links connecting the area with the towns of Abercarn, Risca and NEWPORT via the A467. This road extends north of Crumlin providing access to the towns of Abertillery and Ebbw Vale outside the borough. There are limited transport links north of Blackwood to the Heads of the Valleys with the only access provided along the A4048 to Tredegar.

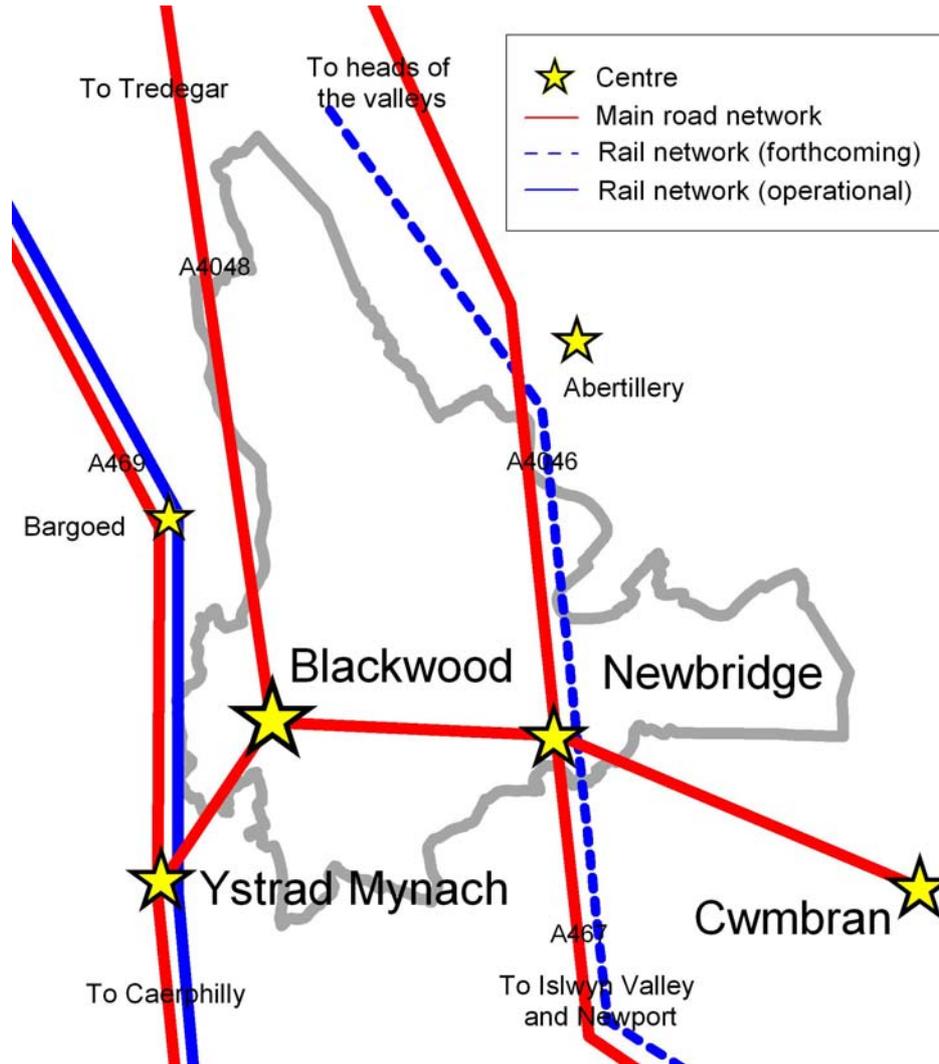
3.2 The district suffers from an absence of active passenger rail lines. The nearest rail link being Ystrad Mynach Station on the Rhymney Valley Line which connects with Blackwood town centre via a once hourly bus service.

3.3 Proposals for the re-opening of the Ebbw Rail Line have been approved which will provide linkages through Crumlin and Newbridge to the Heads of the Valleys Newport and Cardiff.

3.4 East / West: The primary links in this district are of an east/west grain. The A472 provides the primary cross-valley linkages joining Newbridge, Pontllanfraith, Maesycwmmmer and Ystrad Mynach. In terms of relating to settlements outside the borough, the A472 extends further east to Pontypool. There are no rail links on an east/west axis due to the characteristic valley formation of the land

3.5 Figure 2 depicts the main road network and rail linkages in the Mid Valleys East. Community Plan Area

Figure 2



4 Area Potential

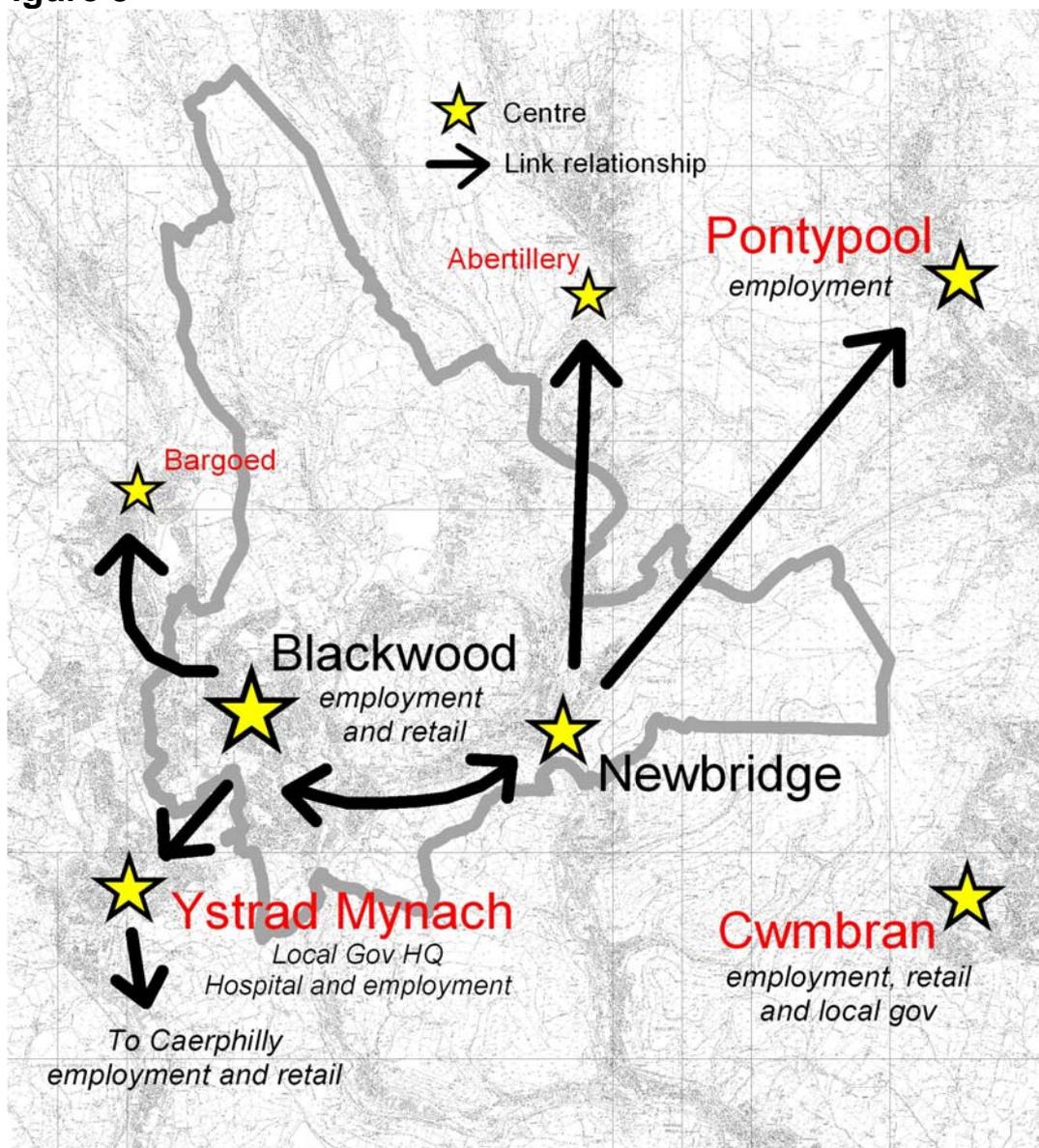
4.1 The area has the potential to consolidate its growth and develop its strength as a sub-regional Centre.

4.2 **Blackwood and Newbridge.** Building on its existing strengths Blackwood has the potential to provide greater variety of consumer goods supporting needs at the sub-regional level. This will be recognised with the development of new retail units on the edge of town and environmental improvements to the existing urban fabric of the town centre. Access to and from the town centre will be improved following the completion of the new bus station.

4.3 Newbridge has already established itself as an area for sports and recreation. This will be enhanced with the opening of the new rail halt providing improved access to recreational facilities, the riverside environment and the surrounding landscape of the Crumlin Valley. Exploiting these benefits there will be the opportunity to establish more service based commerce such as cafes and bars serving the needs of people visiting the area for its recreational value.

4.4 Figure 3 shows the relationship between settlements within and surrounding the Community Plan Area.

Figure 3



4.5 Together with other settlements located along the A469 transport corridor, the opening of the Ebbw Vale rail line will for the

first time provide increased connectivity with Cardiff. This may provide an opportunity to tap into a new market and encourage inward migration into the area.

4.6 Events: Caerphilly balloon festival, held in Blackwood, continues to attract a wealth of tourism to the area throughout its duration. This event could be further capitalised with successful marketing. Staging other events (i.e. town festival/culture festival for the valleys etc) around the same time may provide a stronger hook for tourism with a potential fortnight or month of events throughout the borough. Events held at Bute town Conservation Area, Bargoed Big Bed, Caerphilly Big Cheese, Blackwood Balloon festival, foreign food markets etc would culminate in a period of tourism based activities which together may work more successfully in attracting people to the area.

4.7 Industry and Employment: Sirhowy Enterprise Way (SEW). The scheme is located in the heart of the Sirhowy Valley and improves the A4048/A472 strategic highway network through the mid valleys east district. It consists of a new single carriageway road 3.4km long with two key cross valley links. The '**Chartists Bridge**' provides the primary cross valley linkage from the A469 north of Blackwood to Oakdale Business Park. In addition, the landmark bridge provides a key focal point an attraction to the town.

4.8 Completion of the scheme has already been instrumental to the development of Oakdale Business Park and has the potential to open up more land upon Oakdale upland plateau for business use culminating in around 12,000 – 15,000 prospective new jobs.

5 Analysis:

5.1 In order for the urban cluster to function effectively, the following issues need to be addressed in the district:

- Blackwood town centre needs to diversify its constituent units to incorporate more leisure uses reflecting local demand.
- Formal and commercial leisure opportunities need to be further developed with improved access to facilities in Markham, Argoed and Trinant. There is currently no cinema

in the district with the closest multiplex found outside the borough in Nantgarw, (RCT).

- Newbridge needs to embrace the opportunities of the new rail halt and establish itself as a focus for sports and recreation.
- Road links between Blackwood and the Heads of the Valleys towns need to be improved allowing access to employment sites at Oakdale and Penyfan. Currently there is indirect access via Bargoed / Cefn Fforest-Aberbargoed.
- Capitalise on the intrinsic environmental attraction of the Crumlin Valley around Newbridge as more people are accessible to the area via the new rail halt.
- No rail link in Blackwood, despite it being the major town centre in the centre and north of the borough. Improved inter-modal transport options between Blackwood and Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood and Newbridge is imperative to allow access to facilities and employment in and outside the area.
- Penyfan Ponds and the wider rural area has the potential to play an increased role as an area of informal recreation.

5.2 In order to function as part of the South East Wales integrated city region, the following issues need to be addressed;-

- Improvements in inter-modal transport options need to be established linking Blackwood efficiently with Ystrad Mynach train station and the forthcoming rail halt at Newbridge. This will allow improved access to Cardiff, Newport and the Heads of the Valleys and reduce commuter traffic.
- Existing residential areas need to be made more attractive and new residential sites identified in order to halt net migration outflow from the Mid Valleys Corridor. This should include a wider mix of housing, prioritising locations with easy access to sustainable modes of transport, particularly in view of the re-opening Ebbw Valley rail link.
- Provide improved access from the Blackwood/Oakdale sub-region to the heads of the valleys. A strategic road network linking Penyfan/Oakdale business parks with the north will provide increased employment opportunities.

6 Individual Settlement Functions and Future Opportunities

Blackwood.

6.1 The town functions as a sub-regional centre whose sphere of influence runs across the mid-valleys corridor. The town has the potential to increase service provision with improved transport links following the redevelopment of Blackwood Bus Station and the development of new retail units on the periphery of the town. The completion of the Sirhowy Enterprise Way also provides the opportunity to attract further inward investment to the town in the form of larger commercial and industrial units (dependent on the LDP strategy).

Newbridge.

6.2 The town serves an important role in providing local amenities and services. In addition, Newbridge has established itself as an area for sports and recreation. There will be the opportunity to expand this further with the opening of the Ebbw Valley Rail Line which will allow improved access to Newbridge. This in conjunction with the enhancement of Newbridge town centre and riverside environment will greatly improve Newbridge's appeal as a place to visit and make a home. Exploiting these benefits there will also be the opportunity to establish ancillary commerce such as cafes and bars serving the needs of people visiting the area for its sporting facilities, pleasant riverside environment and attractive town centre.

Pontllanfraith

6.3 Pontllanfraith functions as a residential settlement with house types ranging from small family homes to larger executive housing. The village contains three small neighbourhood centres serving local needs, although primary provision is provided by nearby Blackwood town centre.

Oakdale

6.4 Oakdale serves a dual purpose. Its initial function is that of a residential settlement within the direct influence of both Blackwood and Newbridge. However, following further development at Oakdale business park and the opening of the SEW, its role within the plan area is changing. Oakdale is now becoming synonymous with its business park, which constitutes much of the upland plateau to the rear of the settlement. It is likely that further

development spurred by the SEW will consolidate its role as a key employment site within the plan area with the potential of providing 12 – 15,000 new jobs.

Trinant & Aberbeeg

6.5 Trinant serves predominantly as a residential satellite village to the north of Croespenmaen. The village is isolated with poor transport communications and contains few services or amenities. The topography of the land and substandard communications dictates that it relates poorly to other settlements within the borough.

6.6 Aberbeeg functions as a small residential hamlet, although containing a small district hospital- due for closure. Its location dictates that it relates more to Ebbw Vale and Abertillery rather than other local or sub regional centres within Caerphilly County Borough.

6.7 There is potential for the expansion of these settlements for further residential purposes (subject to the LDP strategy), although this is unlikely given their location.

Crumlin

6.8 Crumlin serves as a residential suburb of Newbridge, and benefits from its own small neighbourhood centre. By virtue of its strategic location along the A469, Crumlin relates more to towns located along this transport corridor including Abertillery, Abercarn and Newport rather than towns within the community plan area. It is likely that the re-opening of the Ebbw Valley rail line will increase the town's desirability, although there is limited opportunity for further expansion due to the topography of the land in this area.

Markham / Argoed/Hollybush

6.9 These smaller villages function primarily as rural residential settlements. In terms of their relationship to other settlements, these small villages located along the A4048 are within the influence of both Blackwood town centre to the south and to Tredegar in the north. These settlements are surrounded by undeveloped farmland and upland plateau, which subject to strategy may provide the opportunity for expansion.

Cefn Fforest/Fleur-de-Lis/Pengam

6.10 These villages form part of the wider Blackwood urban area and largely constitute residential settlements that have coalesced

over time. Due to their proximity to Blackwood town centre, these villages primarily function as residential neighbourhoods and are developed to a sufficient capacity.

4.d LOWER ISLWYN

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 The Lower Islwyn area lies north west of Newport in the old county of Gwent. The Census shows that approximately 23,000 people lived there in 2001 (13.6% of the Borough's population) – this number represented a decrease of 0.5% from that recorded in 1991.

1.2 The area comprises the wards of **Abercarn**, **Crosskeys**, **Risca**, and **Ynysddu**, which extend over 4430 hectares. The vast majority of this land is either moorland, grazing land, or woodland. There are two steep-sided and narrow valleys, carved out by the River Ebbw and its tributary, the River Sirhowy, which are surrounded by mountain plateau. **Flood risk** advice from WAG identifies some significant areas of the valley bottoms as potentially at risk in the future given the effects of global warming on increased rainfall. The urban settlements cover a relatively small percentage of this area, and in the main, they occupy the valley bottoms. The town of **Risca–Pontymister** grew up as a metal fabrication centre, while most of the remaining settlements originated as coal mining villages.

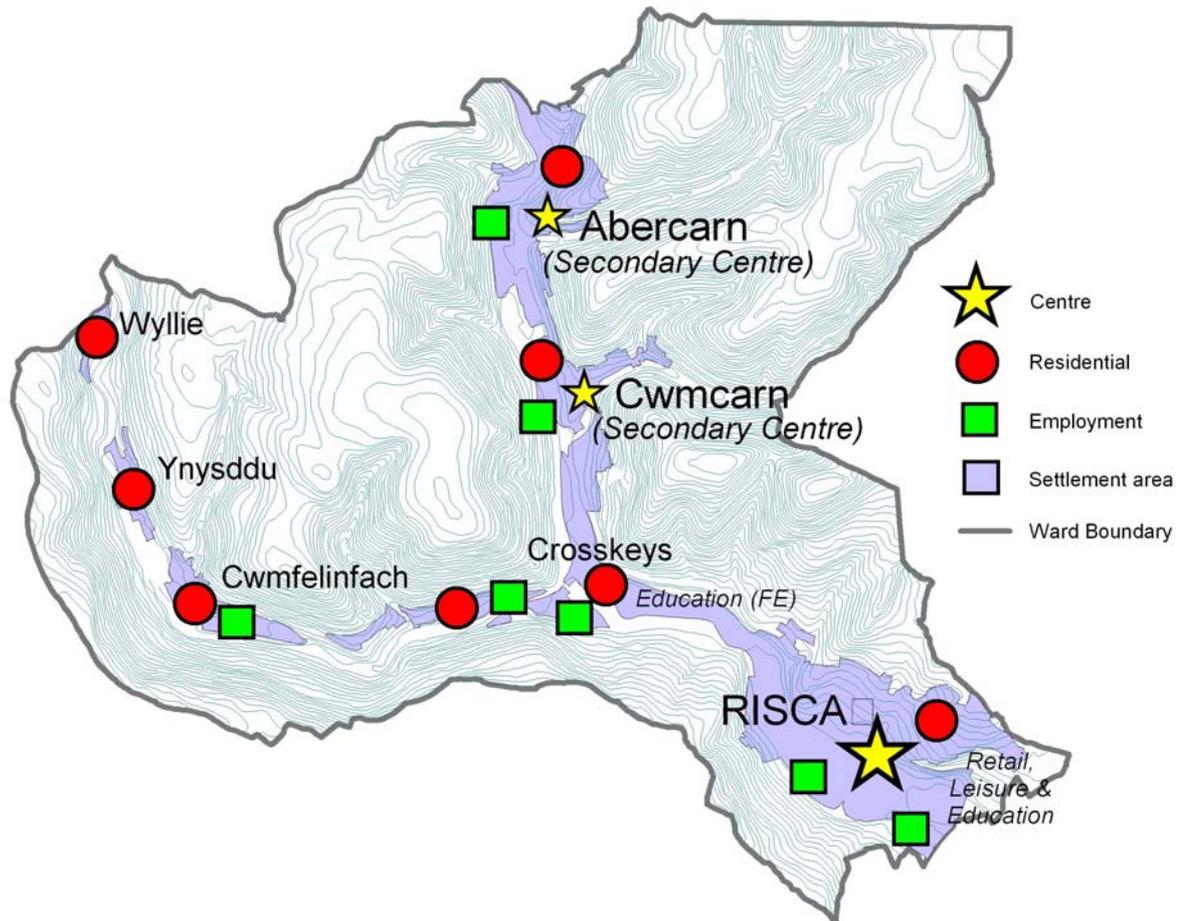
2. MAIN SETTLEMENTS – ROLES & FUNCTIONS 2006

2.1 **Main Urban Hub: Risca-Pontymister** is the largest town in the area with a population, including both suburbs, of approximately 11,500. It contains the only significant shopping centre with 96 retailing units in 2005, and is defined as a Local Centre in terms of retail hierarchy. In addition, there are a comprehensive school and associated leisure centre and swimming pool, and a range of public and commercial services. There are also local NHS units and area offices of the Local Authority dealing primarily with Housing and Social Services provision.

2.2 **Secondary Centres:** In terms of retailing **Abercarn** and **Cwmcarn** are defined as Village Centres, with 14 and 19 retailing outlets respectively, although there are also smaller village centres at **Ty Sign**, **Crosskeys**, and **Cwmfelinfach**.

2.3 **Residential Areas:** The main settlements are **Risca–Pontymister** with **Ty Sign**, **Abercarn**, **Crosskeys**, **Cwmcarn**, **Cwmfelinfach**, **Wattsville** and **Ynysddu**. There are also a

number of minor hamlets / villages such as Pontywaun, Brynawel and Wyllie.



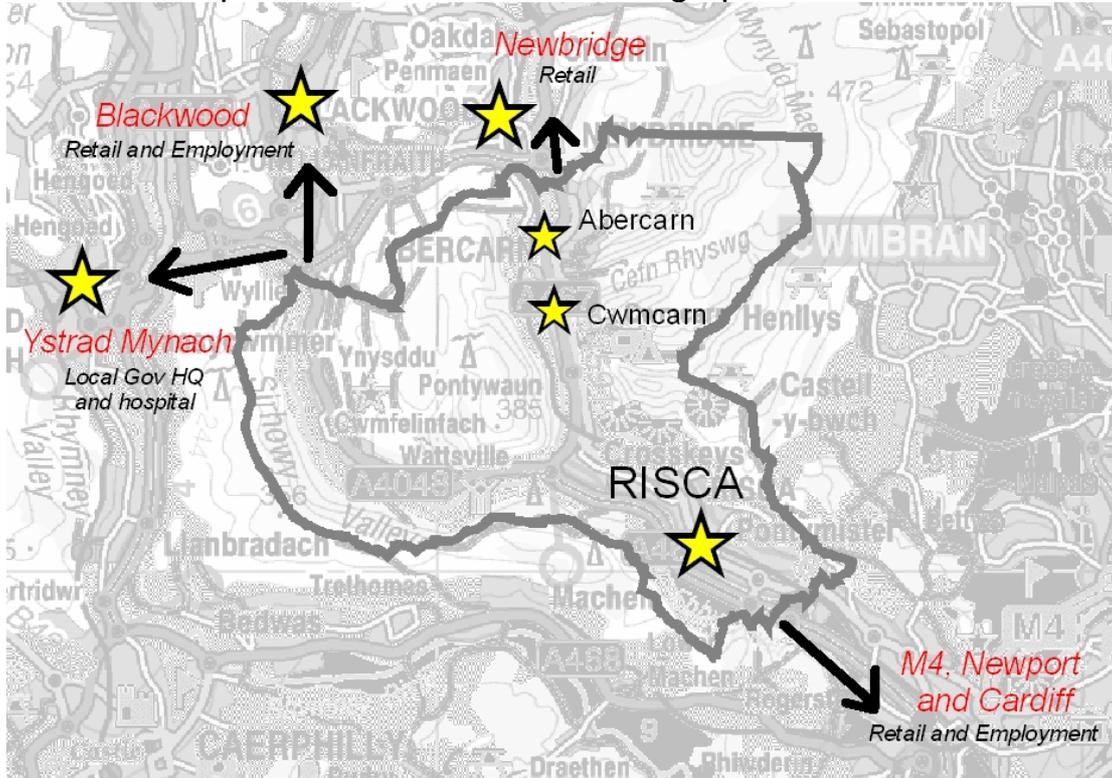
2.4 Industrial Estates: A large industrial estate is located at **Abercarn**, while smaller ones are located at **Crosskeys**, **Cwmcarn**, **Cwmfelinfach**, and **Wattsville**, giving these settlements an employment role as well. In addition, **Risca-Pontymister** has a number of large and small industrial sites, some with single occupiers and others with multiple users.

2.5 Education Hubs: In addition to the Risca Comprehensive School at **Ty Sign**, there is an independent comprehensive school at **Cwmcarn**, and a large further education / sixth form college is located at **Crosskeys**.

3. EXTERNAL LINKAGES

3.1 South: The A467 road is the main route south for both valleys to the **M4** and **Newport**, and to the national and regional centre of **Cardiff**. The imminent Ebbw Valley passenger railway services

will connect the settlements in that valley to Cardiff initially, and Newport thereafter. Immediately to the south in Rogerstone is a Morrisons superstore which serves a large part of the area.



3.2 Northwards in the Sirhowy Valley: The A4048 links the settlements there to the nearby sub-regional retail centre of Blackwood, and also to the other employment centres and facilities in the Mid Valleys West area.

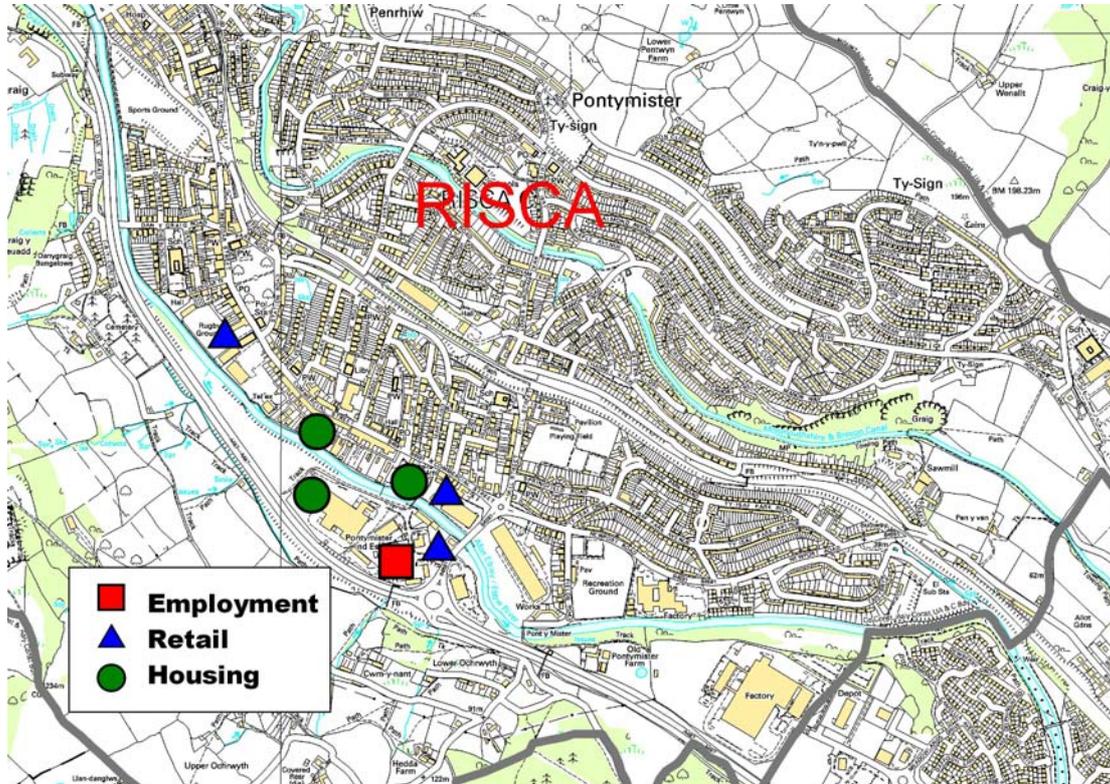
3.3 Northwards in the Ebbw Valley: The A467 and the imminent passenger railway services connect the area to the Local Retail Centre of Newbridge, to employment opportunities in the Mid Valleys East area generally, and the A465 corridor beyond.

3.4 West: There are no good road links into the Rhymney Valley from the area. The only exceptions are a number of relatively poor quality minor roads which lead over the mountain from Risca to Lower Machen, and from Crosskeys to Machen and to Bedwas.

3.5 East: There are no direct main roads or rail links to the east either, although **Cwmbran** is indirectly accessible by road via Crumlin to the north and Rogerstone to the south. However, there are a number of relatively poor quality minor roads which lead over the mountain.

4. REGENERATION POTENTIAL

Risca–Pontymister Regeneration Scheme

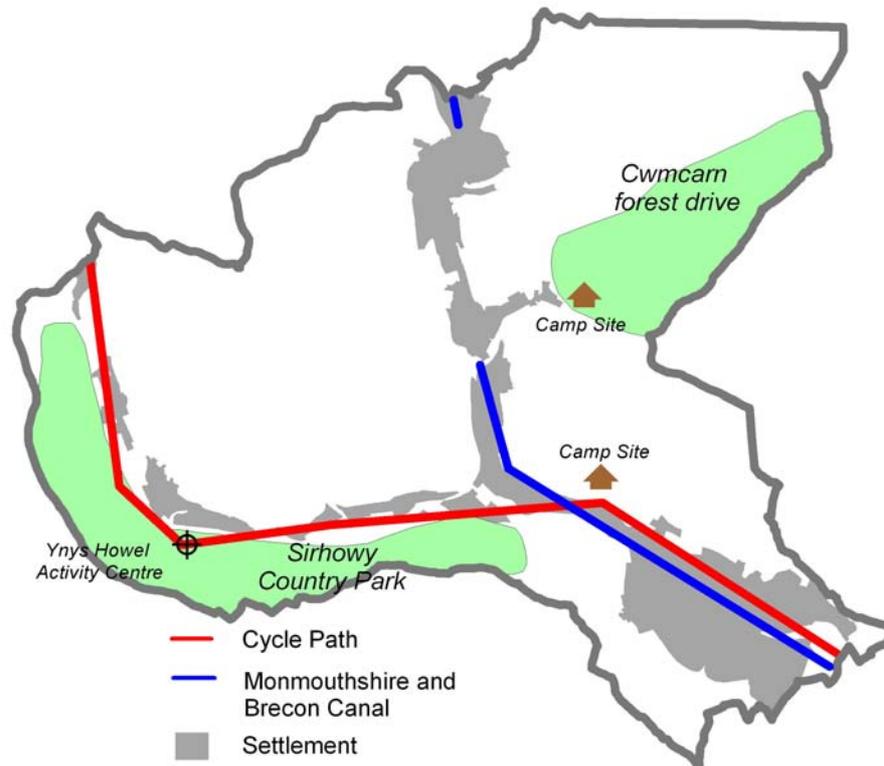


4.1 The closure of the Risca Foundry has enabled a review of the redevelopment potential of this industrial area and other sites in the town. While the Foundry was still operational, it had not been possible to develop an area of land allocated for industrial use on its northern boundary. The difficulty has been caused by the combination of its long thin shape and a site access constraint, created partly because of the location of this old works. In addition to these two sites, there are other areas in the town whose existing use is either inappropriate in their context, or in decline. If these were redeveloped for appropriate alternative uses they could potentially be of tremendous benefit to the function of the town.

4.2 A possible regeneration scheme involving land on both sides of the River Ebbw could bring new **employment** opportunities, **retailing** units and **residential** development to this part of the town. This would improve the range of the housing stock, promote greater local shopping expenditure and increase local employment opportunities.

5. TOURISM POTENTIAL

5.1 **Landscape:** The hillsides rise sharply from the river valleys and lend a visual emphasis to the enclosed and largely built up valley bottoms. The hilltops are wild areas dramatically contrasting with the urban areas nestling below them. Magnificent views are obtained from the minor roads and long distance footpaths along these ridge-ways.



5.2 **Country Park:** The **Sirhowy Valley Country Park** is good for both walking and cycling. A small farm trail is open all year round and nearby a Local Nature Reserve, which an ancient and beautiful mixed woodland. There is another Local Nature Reserve alongside the River Sirhowy.

5.3 **Forest Drive:** The **Cwmcarn Forest Drive** allows visitors to sample a hillside forestry area by car or cycle or on foot. The main attractions are the various views around the circuit and access to **Twmbarlwm**, the highest point locally with fine views over the Bristol Channel. Also on site is a nationally acclaimed mountain bike facility, including a downhill track and a circuit, and a campsite.

5.4 **Cycle Paths:** Route 47 of the National Cycleway passes through the area from Newport to Nelson via Risca, Crosskeys and the Sirhowy Valley Country Park. A local cycle route is also planned from Crosskeys northwards in the Ebbw Valley.

5.5 Accommodation: There are no major hotels in the area but there is accommodation in a pub in Risca and a guest house in Crosskeys. However, the majority of facilities are related to the existing tourism sites: bunkhouses at Ynys Howell Activity Centre in the Country Park, a campsite at Cwmcarn Forest Drive, log cabins near the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, a guest house alongside the canal, and farm cottages on the hillside between the canal and Twmbarlwm at Risca.

5.6 Heritage: There is a conservation area at Pontywaun and numerous listed buildings, but these are of architectural or local interest only and are unlikely to provide a tourist attraction in themselves.

6. ANALYSIS

6.1 In order for the urban cluster of settlements to function more effectively the following issues need to be addressed in this area:

- The commercial function of the area's centres are overshadowed by larger and more successful centres in surrounding areas, not least Newport and Blackwood. However, despite this situation, there is still scope to attract new shops and commercial businesses in the area's main centre at **Risca-Pontymister**. The imminent reopening of the railway to passenger services is likely to enhance the status of the town in this respect.
- The surrounding attractive and accessible countryside provides a very positive environmental setting and many of the settlements could become more desirable residential locations if the range of housing were not so limited. There is a need to develop a wider choice of modern housing. This is most easily rectified by the regeneration potential in **Risca-Pontymister** town centre but there is also some potential arising from other brownfield sites and allowing small developments elsewhere.
- The area's attractive and accessible countryside could be the basis of even further tourism potential. In addition to enhancement of the existing leisure facilities, there could be scope to build on the area's strengths by implementing the Canal restoration project and possible development of the

adjacent Risca Quarry for associated leisure uses. The potential of the riverbanks for leisure purposes are also largely ignored at present.

- There is no themed regular annual event in the area to compare with Blackwood's Big Balloon or Caerphilly Town's Big Cheese. Such an event might create some tourism potential as well as local interest if marketed imaginatively.
- For those services and facilities that the area will never be able to fulfil, the public transport links to other areas need to be improved and service frequency increased. This will enable residents to reach those services elsewhere, and especially the developing employment opportunities of Newport and Cardiff.

7. FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

7.1 Overall: The envisaged improvement in the range and quantity of the housing stock should encourage the retention of the area's existing residents. It may also attract migrants from other areas who recognise the beauty of the area and take advantage of the increased accessibility to other parts of the region. The potential leisure enhancements will be of benefit to residents and also highlight the area as a more worthy destination for visitors.

7.2 Risca-Pontymister with TySign: As the main settlement of the area, the town fulfils a wide range of functions. The envisaged residential development in the town should seek to enhance the range of housing provision. This would enable it to become a more popular residential location, particularly once the rail passenger service is open. The envisaged improvements to retail provision in the shopping centre may lead to the town meeting the daily needs of a third of the area's population. By taking advantage of redevelopment opportunities as they arise, the town could also develop an enhanced employment role as a rail-oriented location for small and medium sized office-based businesses. The town possesses a wide range of educational and leisure facilities, including a comprehensive school library leisure centre and playing fields. These should be renewed and enhanced as necessary. Significant environmental improvements to the public realm and improvements to the fabric of buildings in

the main commercial street could finally sweep away the last dowdy impressions that the town has exuded in recent years.

7.3 Abercarn: The primary function is as a residential area. Where possible, there should be new housing provision and environmental improvements, particularly in the village centre, so that it becomes a more popular place to live. Abercarn is an important industrial employment centre, and this function should continue. However, with the improvements to public transport connections residents will also be within easy and sustainable commuting distances of employment and other opportunities elsewhere in the region.

7.4 Cwmcarn: The primary function is as a residential area. The village also lies just north of the Cwmcarn Forest Drive and the end of the Canal which adds to its attractiveness. Where possible, there should be new housing provision, so that it becomes an even more popular place to live. There is also an industrial function although there are indications that one company may wish to close its operations. Therefore, there is scope to reassess this particular function. It may be preferable to consider redevelopment for residential purposes instead as the industrial site could be integrated fairly successfully with the existing settlement. The village will also be within easy and sustainable commuting distance of employment and other opportunities elsewhere in the region given the forthcoming improvements to public transport.

7.5 Crosskeys: The primary function is as a residential area, but there is also a strong educational role because of the presence of the FE College. Crosskeys is also an industrial employment centre, and this function should continue. However, with the improvements to public transport connections residents will also be within easy and sustainable commuting distances of employment and other opportunities elsewhere in the region.

7.6 Cwmfelinfach: The primary function of this village is residential. If desirable on all other grounds, this role should be enhanced by increasing the range of housing provision, and good public transport links should be maintained with other centres. The village is adjacent to an industrial estate and this use should continue.

7.7 Wattsville: The primary function of this village is residential. If desirable on all other grounds, this role should be enhanced by

increasing the range of housing provision, and good public transport links should be maintained with other centres. The village also has an industrial function and it is considered that the desirability of continuation or redevelopment of such sites should be judged on their individual merits.

7.8 Brynawel, Pontywaun, Wyllie and Ynysddu: These settlements are exclusively residential in function. If desirable on all other grounds, this role should be enhanced by increasing the range of housing provision, and good public transport links should be maintained with other centres.

4.e CAERPHILLY BASIN

1.OVERVIEW

1.1 The Caerphilly Basin is the southernmost Community Plan area within the Authority, being located at the southern end of the former Rhymney Valley District Council area. The Census shows that approximately 53,000 people lived in the Basin area in 2001 (31.25% of the Borough's total population), an increase of almost 5% from the 1991 population.

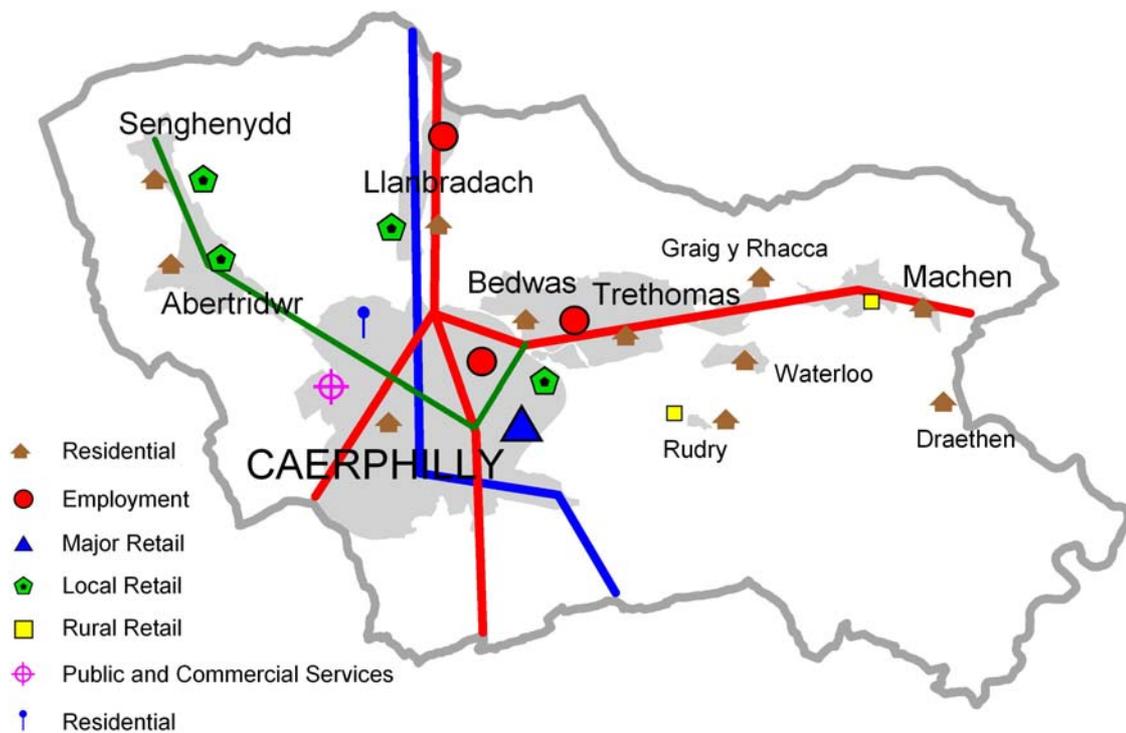
1.2 The area comprises the wards of **Aber Valley, Llanbradach, Bedwas Trethomas & Machen, St James, St Martins, Penyrheol** and **Morgan Jones**, covering some 7936 hectares. The vast majority of this land (81.3%) lies outside of the existing settlements and comprises a mix of agricultural and open land that is largely identified as Special Landscape Area, seeking to protect the valuable landscape quality. The remaining land is covered by the main settlements of Caerphilly, Abertridwr, Senghenydd, Llanbradach, Bedwas, Trethomas, Graig-Y-Rhacca and Machen, whilst smaller rural villages are present to the southeast at Waterloo, Rudry and Draethen. The basin area is the subject of significant development pressure, due to its location in close proximity to Cardiff and the M4 Corridor. The exception to this, however, are the Aber Valley settlements of Abertridwr and Senghenydd, both of which display characteristics similar to those experienced by settlements further north in the former coal mining areas.

2. MAIN SETTLEMENTS – ROLES & FUNCTIONS 2006

Caerphilly: Main Centre In County Borough - Residential, Major Retail, Employment, Tourism and Commercial and Public Services Role

2.1 Caerphilly is the largest town within the County Borough, accommodating over 18.25% of the total population within the authority area. Caerphilly's origins date back to the construction of the Norman castle, which was started in 1267. A settlement quickly sprang up around the castle and remained largely unchanged until after the Civil War, when the settlement developed into a market town. In the nineteenth century the industrial revolution fuelled the growth of the town and Caerphilly emerged as the main town in the area.

2.2 Caerphilly and Blackwood comprise the main retail centres in the County Borough, both attracting retail trips from a wide catchment. In retail terms Caerphilly is classed as a sub-regional centre within the retail hierarchy and is the largest retail centre within the County Borough. The town centre comprises 179 retail units within Use-Classes A1 and A2. Caerphilly has a relatively strong retail base with nearly 30% of the units being occupied by multiple retailers. Caerphilly has, over the last few years, been the subject of significant retail development, and is still the subject of continuing development and redevelopment pressure that will assist in the continued improvement to its the retailing provision.



2.3 Caerphilly does suffer from competition with the Regional Centre in Cardiff and, to a much lesser extent, the major sub-regional centre at Newport. As a result a significant level of retail spend is being lost to these other centres.

2.4 Caerphilly is one of the centres of employment within the County Borough, comprising 5 existing employment sites totalling 58.43 hectares, as well as employment provision within the retail centre itself.

2.5 There are 9 primary schools, 2 welsh-medium schools and three comprehensive schools, of which two have sixth form levels. Caerphilly also accommodates a range of public and commercial services, and also includes the Caerphilly and District Miners Hospital, although the hospital is currently being considered for closure.

2.6 The castle is a significant tourist attraction, drawing in excess of 80,000 visitors very year. In addition to this the Caerphilly Big Cheese event is also a significant attractor.

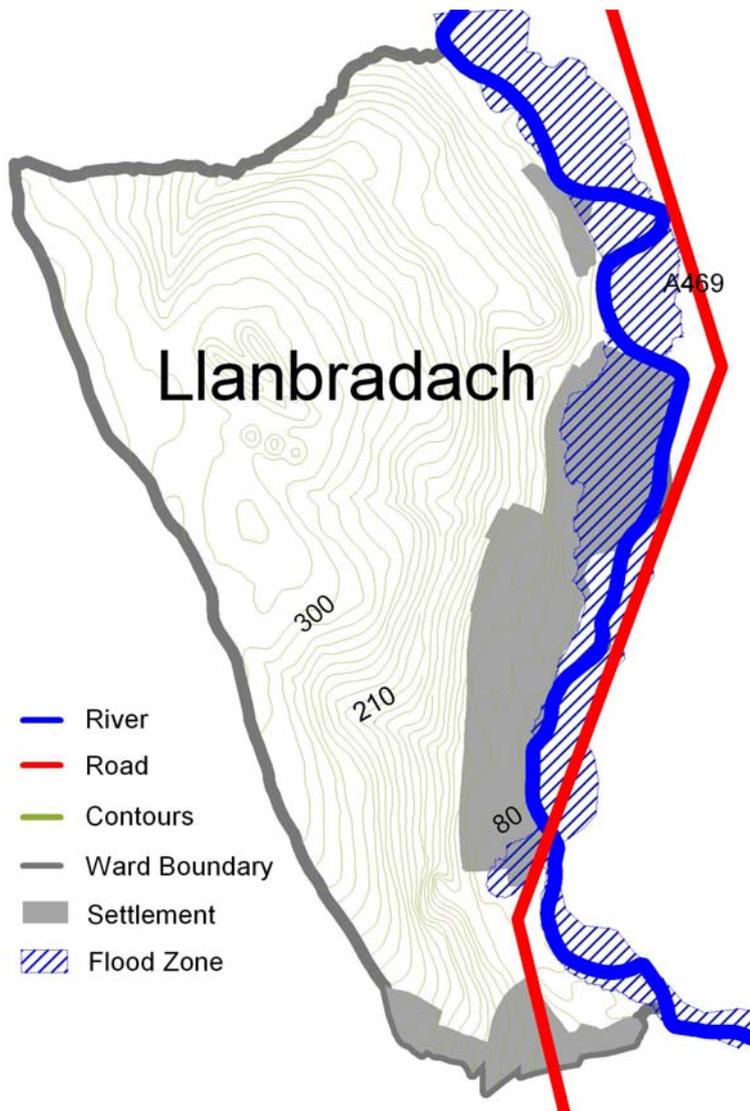
2.7 Caerphilly also plays an important role in the strategic context as a satellite and dormitory town for Cardiff. Caerphilly undoubtedly provides housing for the employment base in Cardiff, and a significant level of retail expenditure is also lost to the capital city.

Bedwas: Secondary Centre - Residential, Employment and Local Retail Role

2.8 In terms of retailing is defined as a local centre. In addition to its local retail provision, Bedwas is also a significant employment centre, accommodating 2 employment sites totalling 60.78 hectares (which could be increased with the inclusion of the waterloo paint works site at 15.6 hectares). Bedwas also has its own Comprehensive school. Bedwas is a residential and employment centre in the Caerphilly Basin.

Llanbradach: Secondary Centre - Residential, Local Retail and Employment Role

2.9 In retailing terms Llanbradach is defined as a local centre. The settlement is largely residential in nature and is sandwiched between the main northerly road (A469) and the steeply sloping hills to the west. Llanbradach is severely constrained by the potential for land to flood. A significant amount of land within the settlement lies within the Flood Zone C2 as identified by the Environment Agency. Sensitive uses, such as housing, are not suitable within these areas. Llanbradach has a small employment site, only 4.82 hectares, but this site is set to accommodate the first of the County Borough's waste management facilities.



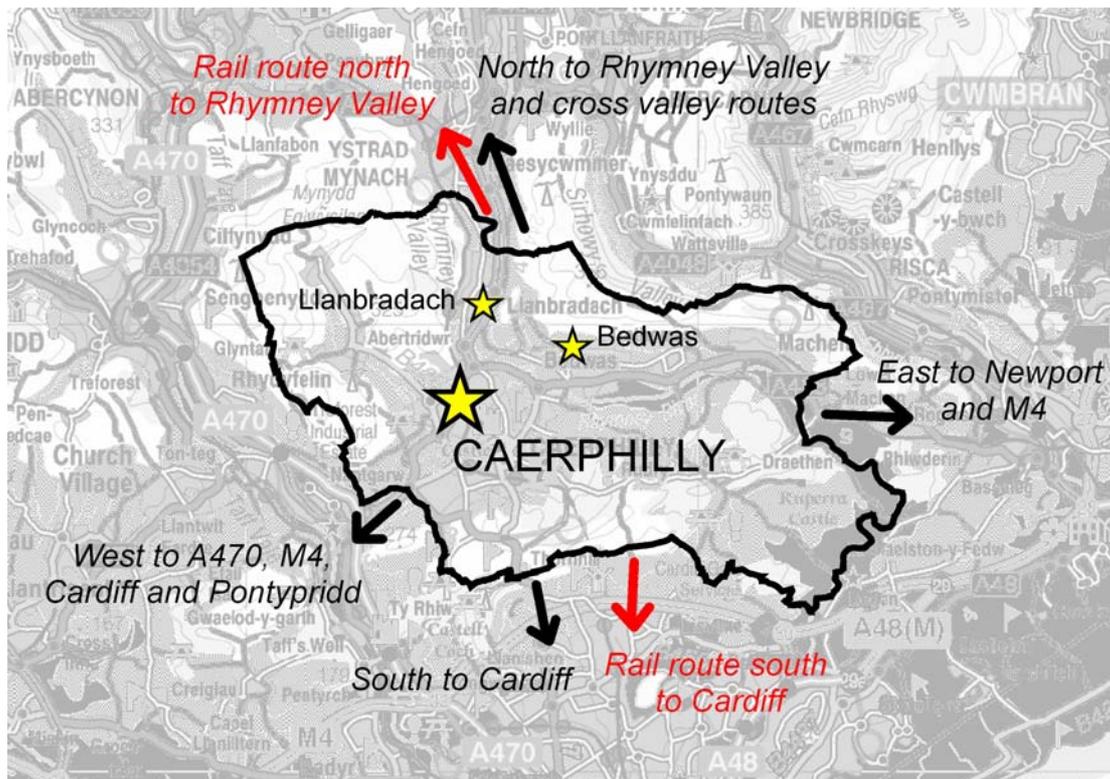
Abertridwr and Senghenydd: Secondary Centres – Residential and Local Retail Role

2.10 Abertridwr and Senghenydd are the main settlements within the Aber Valley. They are predominantly residential in nature but, in retail terms, both have been identified as local centres. Both these settlements portray characteristics of settlements located to the north of the County Borough, within the former coalmining areas, e.g. little development pressure, reducing population. The Aber Valley, in UDP Strategy terms, is identified as a Community Regeneration Zone. This is in stark contrast to the remainder of the Caerphilly Basin, which is identified within the zone of consolidation and is characterised by high levels of development pressure and a potential for significant in-migration. The role and function of these two settlements is somewhat contradictory to the overall functioning of the Basin as a whole and, therefore, it is important that the role of these settlements is enhanced.

Machen, Trethomas, Graig-Y-Rhacca, Waterloo, Rudry and Draethen: Other Settlements – Residential Role

2.11 All of the remaining settlements within the Caerphilly Basin are basically residential in nature. However, in retail terms Rudry and Machen have been identified as Rural communities whose services should be protected.

3. EXTERNAL LINKAGES



3.1 The Caerphilly Basin lies at the crossroads of north-south and east-west routes from outside and within the County Borough Area. To the north the A469 provides access to services and facilities in the other settlements of the Rhymney Valley and also provides access to the main A472 cross-valley link.

3.2 To the south the Mountain Road provides access to Cardiff for commuters and for those who wish to access the services and facilities that the Capital City affords.

3.3 To the east the A468 provides access to Newport and the eastern M4 Corridor, whilst the Caerphilly Northern Bypass and the A468 to Nantgarw provides access to the west to the A470, to Cardiff, Pontypridd and other valley areas.

3.4 The Rhymney Valley rail line provides a frequent rail service from Cardiff to the Rhymney valley. There are no east-west rail links within the Caerphilly Basin.

3.5 The Machen to Caerphilly section of the National Cycle network runs in an east-west direction

4. ISSUES AND POTENTIAL

4.1 In the Caerphilly UDP the Basin area (with the exception of the Aber Valley) was included within the Strategy Area of Consolidation. This sought the restriction of development within tight settlement boundaries. The aim of this strategy was to force development further north into the valley within the central area of growth. The strategy also provided a tool for resisting the significant development pressure that exists across most of the Basin. However, the strategy of consolidation has undoubtedly affected the potential for growth in the Basin. The multitude of roles performed by Caerphilly alone would be enhanced by growth. There are a number of large brownfield sites that lie within the Caerphilly settlement. These could be developed for mixed use in accordance with the Strategy of Consolidation.

4.2 It should also be noted that the continuance of a strategy of Consolidation for the Basin area is not the only option. A strategy of Constraint could be adopted which would see the current brownfield sites excluded from the settlements in order to constrain development opportunities in the basin to force development further up the Valley. Such a strategy would have significant potential impacts upon the settlements and their roles. The restriction of development would mean that the settlements would effectively be left to stagnate at current levels and enhancement and improvement would only be realised as a result of redevelopment.

4.3 Conversely an active Strategy for Growth could be pursued, where additional land, over and above that existing in the settlements, would be identified for development. The realisation of development capital from such a strategy could well resolve some of the significant issues facing the area as a whole. However traffic impacts and the need to match growth in all facets of the settlements could cause significant problems.

4.4 Traffic congestion, both within Caerphilly town and on the core network (Caerphilly Northern Bypass and A469) is a key factor for

the future performance of the Basin area. The Council recently adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance that formalised an obligation for house building to contribute towards improvements to the core network. However this obligation only seeks to mitigate against the effects of the traffic generation of the housing sites themselves, and does not seek to reduce traffic congestion to below existing levels. If growth for this area is proposed then significant improvements to the highway network will be required. The subject of a Southern Bypass for Caerphilly has always been contentious. However consideration needs to be given to all schemes that could relieve congestion on the Core Network.

4.5 Improvements to the rail service throughout the Rhymney Valley are to be implemented over the next few years. This will increase the capacity of trains servicing the valley, affording opportunities for increased rail commuting and park and ride. These improvements, along with the opening up of the Ebbw Vale Line, will provide significant opportunities to enhance rail transport within the County Borough.

4.6 There are currently proposals for further redevelopment of Caerphilly Town centre. Such redevelopment would be a significant improvement to the retail offer in the Town and Community Plan Area. There is evidence to suggest that demand exists to continue the development/redevelopment of Caerphilly Town Centre and the enhancement of the retail offer. This would strengthen the retail function of the town centre and may help stem some of the lost expenditure to other centres, particularly Cardiff.

4.7 The Basin is one of the employment centres within the County Borough, providing over 130 hectares of existing industrial land. These sites have high occupancy levels although there are opportunities for redevelopment of some parts of the estates. It should be noted that the Waterloo Paint Works site (identified as an existing industrial site in the UDP) is currently being considered for mixed-use development, which could remove much of the existing 15 hectares of employment land from the total stock. One issue that needs to be addressed for the future is whether the provision of employment land in the Basin needs to be increased with new allocations. The take up of land in this area is relatively good and new sites are likely to be taken up over a relatively short space of time and the employment base in the area would be stronger. However, this is likely to have adverse effects on other areas with surplus land that are seeking employment development.

4.8 The Council's strategy of marketing the County Borough as the "Smart Alternative" to employment opportunities within Cardiff is one way in which the Council are seeking to redressing the balance with its bigger neighbour.

4.9 Tourism is playing an increasingly important role in the Basin Economy. The Castle attracts 80,00 people a year and the annual "Big Cheese" and the Caerphilly International Festival are landmark events in the basin calendar. The Basin is also blessed with high quality rural landscape and has two golf clubs. There are two major hotels within Caerphilly that provide tourist accommodation. There is scope for the improvement of the tourist product in the basin, but this needs to be undertaken as a complete package with other tourist facilities throughout the County Borough. Consideration is currently being given to enhancing the tourism product of the castle, and future links to the conservation quality in the basin area could also be utilised.

4.10 The regional role of the basin as a dormitory for Cardiff is also an issue that needs to be addressed. Enhancement of this role, by the provision of additional residential land, could also have significant spin-off effects in terms of local economy. Also it would undoubtedly have a significant adverse impact upon the highway infrastructure within the basin and on links to Cardiff.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 In order for the urban cluster of settlements to function more effectively the following issues need to be addressed in this area:

- Traffic congestion within the area needs to be addressed.
- The issues relating to the Aber Valley settlements need to be addressed, to encourage development and enhance their role in the Basin.
- The key issue of whether to further consolidate (and to some extent constrain growth in) the basin area, is key to how the role of Caerphilly town and the other settlements in the basin area evolve over the forthcoming plan period.
- Whether to enhance the area's role in the strategic context.

6. FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

6.1 Overall: It is unlikely that the roles of the settlements themselves, or the area as a whole, will change over the LDP Plan period. The future for the area depends upon strategy decisions over constraint or growth and how they relate the roles on a County, or regional basis.

6.2 Caerphilly: Will remain the main settlement within the County Borough. Continued enhancement of the retail functions and some growth in residential provision is likely to be the main factors for the future. Key strategic decisions will impact upon how other functions (employment, service, commercial) will develop over time.

6.3 Aber Valley: This is the one area that needs active intervention. The settlements exhibit characteristics of more deprived settlements located within the former coalmining areas. Positive action is required to improve the fortunes of these settlements to bring them in-line with the remainder of the existing area of Consolidation.

6.4 Bedwas: Bedwas Colliery is a potential mixed-use site that would see the residential base of the town increase. Again key strategic decisions will influence how the employment and dormitory functions will develop.

6.5 Llanbradach: Proposals for improved Park and Ride at the Rail station could have important impacts for this settlement, particularly as part of the regional dormitory area for Cardiff. The flood constraints within the settlement mean that there is little scope to increase the residential base in his settlement.

6.6 Waterloo: The redevelopment of the former paint works site for mixed use would result in a massive increase in the size of this settlement in residential terms. Consideration could also be given to the further expansion of this village into a new settlement.

6.7 Trethomas and Graig-Y-Rhacca: These settlements could accommodate residential development and enhance their residential role. However these settlements are constrained to some extent by land of ecological value, and development opportunities may be restricted.

6.8 Rudry and Machen: It is unlikely that these rural settlements will be the subject of any significant development during the LDP period.

Appendix 1

ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

1. As an integral part of plan preparation the Council is required to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the LDP.
2. The first stage in undertaking the SEA is to identify the 'scope' of the assessment, that is the factors and issues that need to be considered as an integral part of the assessment process (the '*Scoping Report*').
3. Outlined below is the key environmental and sustainability issues that are identified in the '*Draft Scoping Report*' published in June 2006.

Population And Human Health

1. Whilst the population has remained relatively stable it has increased in the south and decreased in the north of the county borough.
2. Declining Household size.
3. There is an age demographic shift, the numbers of elderly people are increasing whilst the young are decreasing.
4. Premature death rates are high particularly in the north of the borough.
5. Caerphilly borough has high death rates from heart attack and chronic pulmonary disease.
6. Obesity levels are the worst in Wales at 20%.
7. Educational qualifications in the county borough are amongst the worst in Wales.
8. There is a large proportion of older properties (pre-1919) which tends to be the poorest stock.
9. There is an over supply affordable of housing in the north of the county borough and an under supply in the south.
10. There are large numbers of permanently sick/disabled members of the workforce.
11. There are large areas of indicated multiple deprivation within the county borough which contains 13 of the top 100 wards within Wales.

12. Affordability of homes and possibly a rural issue also.
13. Imbalance between skills and training and local jobs.
14. Sectoral dependency of the economy.

Air Pollution

1. Damage caused by air pollution to habitats and eco systems.
2. Damage caused by air pollution to buildings, particularly those made from limestone.
3. Currently low levels of car ownership.
4. High levels of out commuting.
5. Dispersed services.
6. Heavy traffic volumes at certain points.
7. High levels of respiratory illness.
8. Low levels of energy efficiency.
9. Low proportion of energy generated from renewable sources.
10. Levels of noise pollution and complaints
11. Odour Pollution
12. Light Pollution

Cultural Heritage and Landscape

1. Threats to listed buildings/scheduled ancient monuments/historic features.
2. Type of building
3. Use of building
4. Location of building
5. Provision of cultural facilities.
6. Threats to landscape and structures of cultural significance.
7. Breakdown of social cohesion and organised groups.
8. Threats from development to the built form and structure of the urban fabric.
9. Development within the countryside.
10. Change to agricultural practices.
11. Access to the countryside and green space.
12. Opportunities to access recreation.

13. Welsh language and numbers of children in Welsh Medium Education.
14. Recreational conflicts as well as those from agriculture.
15. Urban Green Space
16. Verbal Heritage
17. Light pollution

Water

1. Flooding and how to limit incidence .
2. Impact of mine waters from abandoned coal mines.
3. Impacts of residential and other developments in terms of use and run off.
4. Environmental impact of diffuse or intermittent pollution.
5. Insufficient information on ground water levels to fully protect water resources and the environment.
6. Balancing public water supplies against future demands.
7. Flashiness of storm water.
8. Water abstraction.
9. Water Quality.

Geology and Geomorphology

1. Demand for future aggregate.
2. Shallow mine workings.
3. Geological stability.
4. Rising water table.
5. Contaminated land
6. Changing landuse
7. Visibility and accessibility of geological features.
8. Levels of waste produced and amounts recycled.
9. Potential future opencast coal extraction.

Biodiversity

1. Avoid damage to designated wildlife and geological sites within and beyond the County borough.

2. Protect and enhance protected species.
3. Maintain bio diversity avoiding irreversible losses.
4. Retain and improve mosaic of habitats and wildlife corridors.
5. Protect ecology from adverse agricultural changes.
6. Ensure the management of key wildlife sites.
7. Reduce potential damage by climatic change.
8. Provide opportunities for people to understand and appreciate wildlife.
9. Invasive species
10. Recreational pressures.

Climatic Factors

1. Unpredictability of climate change.
2. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Risk of flooding and storm damage.
4. New standards of heating and insulation.
5. New methods of power supply.
6. Effect on bio diversity.

Material Assets

1. Capacity of existing Infrastructure.
2. Condition of existing infrastructure.
3. Need to make most of existing IT technologies.
4. Location of provision in relation to areas of demand.

Appendix 2

PROPOSED SCALE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

1. One of the main functions of the LDP is to ensure that there is sufficient land available in the county borough to provide for all of the services required by its residents. These requirements obviously depend on the number of residents, so the future population level for which provision has to be made is fundamental to the plan.
2. The most basic and important requirement of residents is a home, and land for housing is the largest single land-use that has to be included in the plan. The issues of population and housing are thus both basic to the plan. This note identifies some of the main considerations that have to be taken into account in the preparation of the LDP.

Possible minimum population and housing numbers

3. The population of Caerphilly CB has shown remarkably little variation for a long period: for example, the estimated population of 170,700 in 2004 is the same as in 1981, so there has been little change in population total in the last 23 years.
4. The Caerphilly UDP was based on a projected population for the county borough of 169,800 in 2011, and if this turns out to be the case will mean that the population level of the county borough has been constant for at least 30 years.
5. Population changes can be broken down into two factors, natural change and net migration. Natural change is the difference between the numbers of births and deaths in the population, while net migration is the difference between those moving into and out of the area.
6. For planning purposes there is a fundamental difference between these two factors, in that natural change is by and large uninfluenced by actions of the authority, whereas migration can easily be directly affected, for example by the provision of additional land for housing. Future expectations of natural change are therefore largely taken as given, whereas the land allocations and policies of the LDP will affect future migration levels.
7. In general there have been decreases in numbers of both births and deaths nationally and locally. Birth rates are at historically low levels, and are below the level required to maintain

a constant population: there has been a recent increase in birth rates, but it is not expected that they will reach replacement level within the life-time of the LDP. Mortality rates have fallen slowly for a long period, and it is anticipated that this improvement will continue.

8. In Caerphilly, as in other Valleys authorities, there has been a long-standing trend of population loss due to people moving to other areas. The Caerphilly UDP sought to stop the loss of population through migration, and aimed to achieve a position of migration balance by the end of the Plan period, i.e. by 2011. In fact this position was achieved much earlier than expected, and indeed in the most recent years there has been a modest increase in population due to in-migration. The future population level will depend to a large extent on whether this recent increase through migration continues, or whether the longstanding trends of population loss become re-established.

9. It is certainly possible that Caerphilly will lose population through migration in future years. However, it is difficult to base the LDP on this assumption, since to some extent this could become self-fulfilling: if houses aren't provided within the county borough, then people will have no option other than to move away from Caerphilly.

10. Unlike when the Caerphilly UDP was being prepared, it is now reasonable to assume that the position of migration balance will continue throughout the plan period. This would lead to an increase in the population of Caerphilly through natural change to about 174,000 in 2021, which may be regarded as the realistic minimum for which the LDP should make provision.

11. To estimate the number of new houses that this population will require, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the number of houses required by a population of a given total size has been increasing for a long period, reflecting a number of factors. There has been a long-term trend for families to have fewer children than in the past. Increasing divorce rates and hence numbers of single-parent families have led to smaller households. There has been a significant increase in elderly households, reflecting both increased longevity and relative decline in the provision of institutional care.

12. Thus though there were nearly 6,000 houses built in Caerphilly between 1991 and 2001, the total population remained at the same level. Similarly, the Caerphilly UDP makes provision

for 7,100 houses to be built between 1996 and 2011 to meet the needs of a population at a constant level.

13. Since 1991 annual house-building rates in the county borough have fluctuated between 266 and 899, averaging 535. On the basis of the Caerphilly UDP projections, it can be estimated that a house-building rate of about 500 per year is required in order to maintain the position of migration balance.

The regional context

14. A house-building rate above about 500 per year would mean provision above the level required by residents, and it may of course be considered desirable to provide for an increasing population, so seeking to continue the recent net in-migration into Caerphilly CB. This increase is probably primarily due to the overspill pressure from the M4 corridor, and Cardiff in particular, where high house prices mean that many are unable to purchase property there.

15. The population forecast and the housing requirement for the Caerphilly UDP were estimated largely independently of the plans of neighbouring authorities. However, new WAG guidance means that household and population numbers to form the basis of LDPs now have to be agreed at a regional level.

16. Caerphilly is part of the South East Wales region comprising 10 unitary authorities, which co-operate for planning purposes in the South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG).

17. WAG has prepared population and household projections for the four planning regions of Wales, and planning guidance proposes that these projections, which indicate historically high rates of growth, should be used as a starting point for assessing housing requirements for LDPs and other strategic plans.

18. SEWSPG is currently considering the implications of the WAG regional household forecast, and has agreed on a provisional distribution of the required housing among the ten authorities of the region, based on factors such as previous house-building rates and current land availability.

19. This provisional allocation results in a required house-building rate in Caerphilly of 650 per year. This would represent 10.8% of the region's overall allocation, which is slightly below Caerphilly's 12% share of households in South East Wales.

A house-building rate of 650 per annum could lead to a population for the county borough of 180,000 in 2021.

20. Officers estimate that the amount of brownfield land that could be made available in the county borough is such that, were it considered appropriate, even the maximum housing growth rate suggested above (i.e. 650 per annum) could be accommodated on previously used land, without allocating any new 'greenfield' sites.

Conclusions

21. The Caerphilly LDP has to make provision for the requirements of a population whose level is determined in part by the policies and proposals in the plan. The expected future population level depends primarily on the housing land provision in the plan, which is a matter of policy to be determined by the Council.

22. The long-standing trend of net out-migration from Caerphilly appears to have been halted, and it is now possible to assume that the position if migration balance could be maintained throughout the plan period. This would require a house-building rate of 500 per annum, and could lead to a population for Caerphilly of 174,000 by 2021.

23. On the other hand, if the WAG regional household projection for South East Wales is adopted, the apportionment exercise that has been carried out requires a house-building rate of 650 per annum, and could lead to a population for Caerphilly of 180,000 by 2021.

24. Appendix 3 incorporates a question in respect of the above.

Appendix 3

**Caerphilly County Borough Council
Local Development Plan**

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

**QUESTIONNAIRE
JULY 2006**

Participation and public consultation is essential for effective community and stakeholder engagement with the Local Development Plan (LDP). Early discussion in respect of strategy options is critical for building consensus.

This questionnaire forms a part of a public participation exercise that the Council is undertaking to help inform the development strategy that will underpin the development plan for the county Borough up to 2021.

The Council is also carrying out a series of workshops in July and August 2006 with a wide variety of stakeholder groups.

VISION STATEMENT

Q1 Have you any comments on the Vision Statement? If yes please state below.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

STRATEGY OPTIONS

Q1 Which aspects of Option A would you strongly support or strongly oppose?

Strongly support	
------------------	--

Strongly oppose	

Q2 Which aspects of Option B would you strongly support or strongly oppose?

Strongly support	
Strongly oppose	

Q3 Which aspects of Option C would you strongly support or strongly oppose?

Strongly support	
Strongly oppose	

Q4 On balance, what is your order of preference for the three Options (1 = preferred option, etc)?

Please provide a brief reason to indicate why you have selected this option

.....

FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

In producing the LDP the Council is required to devise a settlement strategy for the County Borough. In order to inform the strategy a functional analysis of the County Borough has been undertaken. For the purposes of this exercise the County Borough has been divided up into five areas namely, the:

1. Upper Rhymney Valley – incorporating Bargoed
2. Mid Valleys West
3. Mid Valleys East
4. Lower Sirhowy Valley
5. Caerphilly Basin

Q6 Do you broadly agree with the role and function of the five areas as indicated?

Area	Yes	No
Upper Rhymney Valley – incorporating Bargoed		
Mid Valleys West		
Mid Valleys East		
Lower Sirhowy Valley		
Caerphilly Basin		

If no please provide your comments below.

.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

P Mears Chief Planning Officer.

ABOUT YOU

Name: (individual or organisation)

Address:.....

.....

.....

.....Postcode:.....

Telephone:.....e-mail address:.....

Are you

Please tick one

Acting for yourself?

An Agent acting for a client?

A contact person acting for an organisation?

If you are an agent or contact person, please provide the name of your client/organisation.

Name: (individual or organisation)

Address:.....

.....

.....

.....Postcode:.....

Telephone:.....e-mail address:.....

Please return to: LDP Team, Planning Division, Civic Offices, Pontllanfraith NP12 2YW by **5pm, Monday, 14th August 2006.**