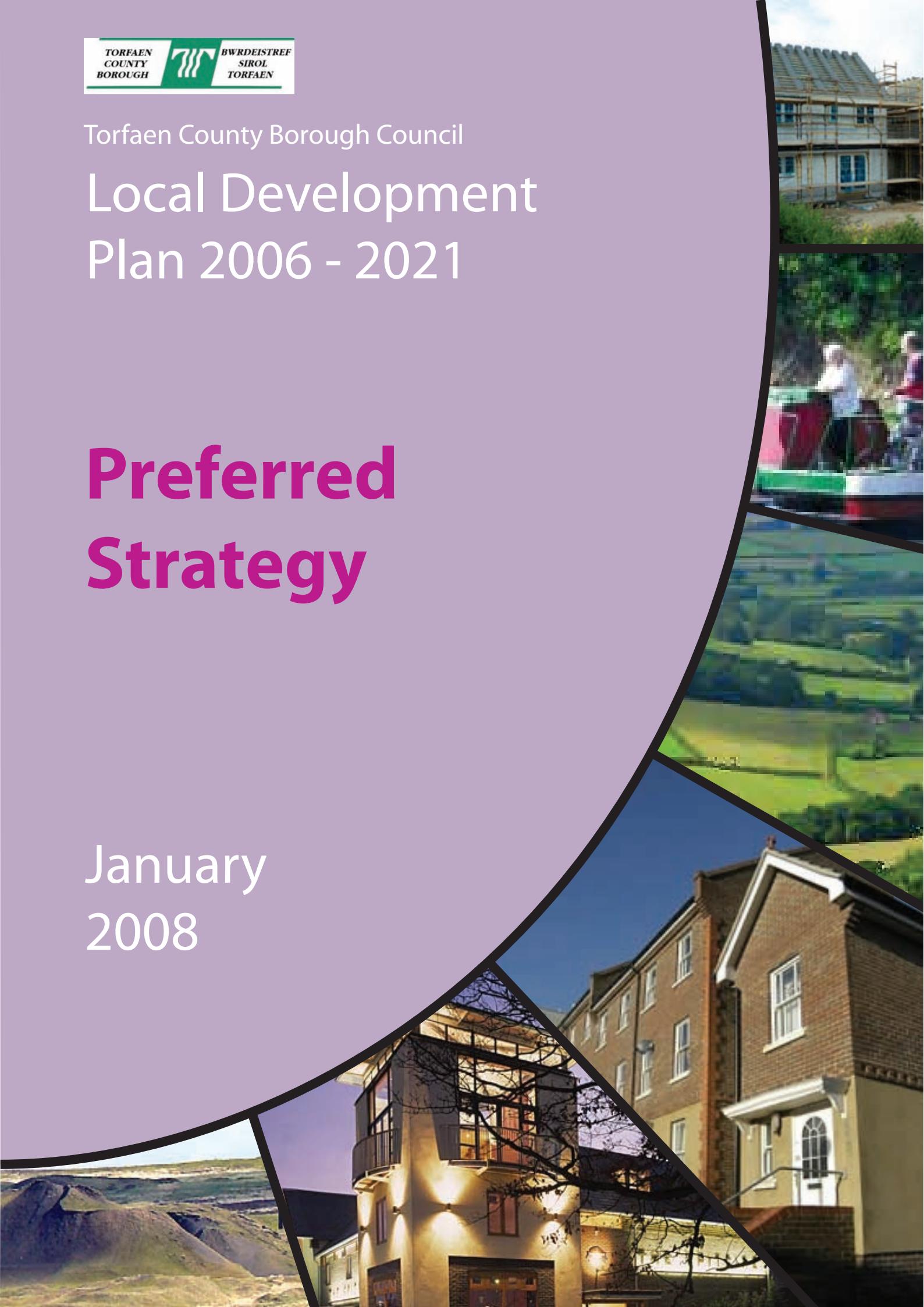


Torfaen County Borough Council

Local Development Plan 2006 - 2021

Preferred Strategy

January
2008



Foreword

I am pleased to present the Preferred Strategy documents for the Torfaen Local Development Plan (to 2021), which the Council approved for public consultation on 25th September 2007. Consultation on the strategy will run for six weeks from 28th January 2008 to 10th March 2008. This consultation is an important stage in the preparation of the plan and offers everyone with an interest in the future development of Torfaen an opportunity to influence the plan before the Council finalises its proposals.

The Torfaen Local Development Plan (LDP) is the Council's key land use planning document. It will set out policies and proposals for the future development and use of land in Torfaen up to 2021, in line with legislative requirements. When adopted it will replace the existing Gwent Structure Plan and Torfaen Local Plan and form the basis for decisions on individual planning applications. The LDP will therefore provide a measure of certainty about what kinds of development will be permitted and where during the plan period.

The LDP will support the vision for Torfaen, set out in the Community Strategy, and also the region as detailed in the Wales Spatial Plan. It will identify opportunities for continuing investment and regeneration including provision for the new homes, jobs, community facilities and transport infrastructure that will be needed over the next 15 years if the area and its people are to prosper.

The Plan will also identify land that needs to be protected for its conservation importance and other measures necessary if our environment is to be safeguarded.

At this stage in the preparation of the LDP the Council is consulting on three documents - Its Preferred Strategy; the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report; and the Candidate Site Assessment Methodology.

The **Preferred Strategy** is not a draft of the full Deposit Plan, but sets out the key issues and the Council's broad proposals to tackle them. It includes the proposed vision, strategic options, preferred strategy and strategic policies. It shows how key environmental, economic and social issues and trends affecting Torfaen will be addressed. The strategy shows how the development needs of the area will be met, including the proposed possible locations for new housing and employment.

The **Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report** identifies the social, economic and environmental implications of the Preferred Strategy options and proposals.

The **Candidate Site Assessment Methodology** identifies the evaluation process which will be used to determine which sites have the potential for further investigation to help the development of the LDP.

Cllr Glyn Caron
Executive Member, Planning and Public Protection

Comments in respect of the proposals should be sent in writing to:-

Duncan Smith
Chief Officer Planning and Public Protection
County Hall
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 2WN

or by email to ldp@torfaen.gov.uk.

Forms for making comments are available from the Civic Centre or County Hall or can be downloaded from our website.

The last day for receipt of comments is Monday 10 March 2008. Comments should specify the matters to which they relate.

Personal information provided as part of a representation cannot be treated as confidential as the Council is obliged to make representations available for public inspection.

However, in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 the personal information you provide will only be used by the Council for the purposes associated with the LDP consultations.

For further information or assistance, please: -

1. look on our website www.torfaen.gov.uk
2. Email the Forward Planning Team: ldp@torfaen.gov.uk
3. Phone the LDP hotline: 01633 648292

All representations will be acknowledged by the Council.

The Council will consider all the views expressed through this consultation when preparing its final version of the Plan.

TORFAEN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREFERRED STRATEGY

January 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Torfaen County Borough Council to prepare a LDP which sets out the Council's objectives and priorities for the development and use of land within Torfaen and its policies for implementing them. The LDP will (as identified in 'Local Development Plans Wales October 2005'): -

- Reflect longer term local aspirations, based on a vision agreed to by the community and stakeholders;
- Provide a plan-led strategy, specific to the area covered, to act as a basis for rational and consistent decisions about the use and development of land
- Guide growth and change while protecting local diversity, character and sensitive environments,
- Identify interdependencies and relationship between places both within and across administrative boundaries; and
- Contain clear and concise statements of how and where places will change over the next 10 to 15 years (the plan period). TCBC has decided to produce its LDP to cover the period 2006 to 2021.

1.2 A further requirement of the Planning Act (2004) is that the LDP must be informed by Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The SA will be an important tool in ensuring the LDP helps contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development. Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environment Assessment is 'an iterative process that identifies the likely significant effects of the plan in terms of economic, social and environmental considerations and the extent to which the plan will achieve its objectives in moving towards sustainable development. The results of SA incorporating SEA will help make the process of LDP preparation more transparent by providing information about the implications of choices being made'.

1.3 The Local Development Plan process is intended to speed up the process of producing development plans. The Torfaen LDP Delivery Agreement which is an integral part of the new system shows a timetable for the introduction of the plan which details the anticipated adoption date for the plan as 2010.

Format of the LDP

1.4 The LDP is intended to be clearer, transparent, more concise, more accessible to the public and easier to review in the future. The plan will not repeat national planning policy (the Welsh Assembly Government document 'Planning Policy Wales Companion Guide' identifies national policy); it will focus on the issues which are specifically relevant to the plan area. The proposed draft format of the LDP is as follows: -

- Introduction;
- Strategy (vision, strategic issues, key policies and monitoring targets etc.);
- Area-wide policies for development, need for Section 106 agreements;
- Major allocations of land;
- Specific policies and proposals for key areas of change or protection;

- Succinct reasoned justification to explain policies and to guide their implementation; and
- Proposals map on a geographical base.

1.5 The Torfaen Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021 will guide the development and use of land in the County Borough for the next 15 years. On adoption it will replace the existing Adopted Torfaen Local Plan (1991-2006) and the adopted Gwent Structure Plan (1991-2006) as the development plan for the County Borough.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Torfaen, the eastern most valley of the south Wales coalfield, includes the communities of Blaenavon, Pontypool, the new town of Cwmbran and their surrounding rural areas. Within the County Borough there are a variety of urban and rural landscapes including the international designated World Heritage site around Blaenavon.

2.2 The north of the County Borough grew during the industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, due to the presence of coal and iron deposits at workable levels. The growth of the settlements in the north continued through to the very early twentieth century. Since then the settlements have suffered from significant out-migration, echoing the decline in the coal and iron industries.

2.3 The south of the County Borough remained largely undeveloped until the designation of the Cwmbran New Town in 1949. Since the early 1950's Cwmbran has been the focus of large-scale development and consequently has had a significant in-migration rate. The high rates of development in Cwmbran were maintained until the mid-1990's, and despite a relative fall from the peak periods of the new town expansion, pressure for development has continued in the area since due to Cwmbran's proximity to the M4 corridor.

National Policy Context:

Sustainable Development

2.4 The Government of Wales Act 1998 places a duty on the National Assembly for Wales to promote sustainable development in the exercise of its function. This is translated into action through the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme *Starting to Live Differently, adopted in 2004*.

2.5 The scheme stresses that working towards sustainability means pursuing 4 broad objectives simultaneously:-

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- Effective protection of the environment, and
- Prudent use of natural resources

2.6 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Local Planning Authority to prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP) for the whole of the County Borough. The Council must exercise this function with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

2.7 In producing the LDP the Council must have regard to national planning policies. The Assembly Government's national land use planning policies are set out in Planning Policy Wales and Minerals Planning Policy Wales, Circulars and Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statements (MIPPs) supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Taken together these national planning policies set out the planning framework to help achieve sustainable development.

The Wales Spatial Plan

2.8 The Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) provides the overarching policy framework for the future spatial development of Wales and is a material consideration in the preparation of the LDP.

2.9 The Wales Spatial Plan provides guidance in relation to various regions. Torfaen County Borough together with the neighbouring local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire and Newport, lie within the South East Region of Wales, which has been identified by the Spatial Plan as 'The Capital Network'.

2.10 The Vision for the Capital Network is:

'An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life - international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and Europe, helping to spread prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales'

2.11 The Wales Spatial Plan strategy for the Capital Network is:

- To strengthen and reintegrate the existing system of towns and cities within South East Wales so that the area functions as a coherent urban network, and can compete internationally. Integrated transport is crucial to this.
- To work with our partners to develop an ambitious programme of joined-up regeneration action along the Heads of the Valleys corridor which will complement the planned upgrading of the A465. The aim of this will be to improve quality of life, retain and attract residents, and increase the prosperity of the whole area focusing initially on unlocking the potential of Merthyr Tydfil and Ebbw Vale".

2.12 The Strategic Development project which is anticipated to be published in the near future will provide further guidance on the roles and functions of settlements within the South East Wales area and also the likely strategic sites and projects to support this strategy. Torfaen straddles the three key zones developing in the project namely the M4/coastal belt, connections corridor and the Heads of the Valleys area. Torfaen will therefore play a major part in the developing WSP strategy of linking the growth potential of the south with the need to increase access to and regeneration of the north.

Regional Policy Context:

Turning Heads - Heads of the Valleys Strategy

2.13 The Heads of the Valleys Strategy sits firmly within the context of the Wales Spatial Plan and sets out a broad framework for change in the Heads of the Valleys area. The preferred strategy for the regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys centres upon the establishment of sustainable and balanced communities throughout the area. The strategy has been developed around five priority themes:

- An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment
- A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities
- A well-educated, skilled and healthier population

- An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience
- Public confidence in a shared bright future

South East Wales Strategic Planning Group - Housing Figures as a result of MIPPS Statement on Housing

2.14 One of the main functions of the LDP is to ensure that there is sufficient land available in the County Borough for all the services required by its residents. These requirements are obviously dependent on the number of residents, so the future population level for which provision has to be made is fundamental to the Plan.

2.15 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. *Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 01/2006 Housing* states:

"The latest Assembly Government National and Sub-National Household Projections for Wales should form the starting point for assessing housing requirements. Within each region local planning authorities should work together collaboratively, and with appropriate stakeholders (for example house builders and Utility Companies) as necessary, to apportion to each authority the Assembly Government household projections, or agree their own regional policy-based projections...."

2.16 The latest Assembly Government household projections indicate an increase in the number of households in the South East Wales Region of 108,900 between 2003 and 2021.

2.17 In line with WAG policy, Torfaen County Borough Council has been working closely with the other 10 unitary authorities in the South East Wales region through the South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) to consider the implications of the WAG regional household forecast, and to apportion the projections across the region.

2.18 The role of Cwmbran as a new town has meant that Torfaen's population increased rapidly during the 1950 and 60's however continuing population decline from the north and a reduce growth in Cwmbran from the 1970's onwards has meant that Torfaen's population has been relatively static from the 1980's onwards at approximately 90000.

2.19 The population of SE Wales is expected to grow significantly over the plan period. For Torfaen to maintain its relative share of the distribution of new housing in SE Wales it is envisaged that approximately 6000-7000 new dwellings would be required by 2021.

2.20 SEWSPG 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, current land availability, and environmental capacity.

2.21 The provisional apportionment exercise that has been undertaken by SEWSPG suggests the County Borough to allocate land to accommodate 6300

dwellings over the plan period (a house building rate of over 400 dwellings per annum) leading to a high rate of growth in the population by 2021. In the Council's view this rate of housing growth is significant given existing long-standing population trends. In order for Torfaen to meet its regional responsibilities the apportionment figure is accepted as a basis for determining land allocation for housing in the County Borough.

South East Wales Regional Waste Plan

2.22 The Regional Waste Plan (RWP) 2004 provides the framework to develop an integrated network of waste management facilities to treat and dispose of waste in South East Wales. Its main aim is to achieve the 2020 Landfill Directive targets by 2013 principally through recycling and composting and reducing the amount of waste going to landfill.

2.23 The Regional Waste Plan has the following Vision and Aims:

To provide an agreed strategy for the region setting out a land use planning framework for the efficient and effective management of wastes in South East Wales with the following aims:

- A** to meet the needs of the communities and businesses in a sustainable way
- B** to minimise adverse impacts on the environment and health
- C** to accord with the principles, policies and targets set by national and European legislation

The plan has been approved by all of the constituent authorities in South East Wales.

2.24 Technical Advice Note 21: Waste (November 2001) requires the RWP to be reviewed every 3 years. This review is presently underway and the LDP will be required to have regard for the revised RWP when it is complete.

2.25 As an integral part of the review process the South East Wales Regional Waste Group are in the process of identifying Areas of Search for the location of waste treatment and recycling facilities. The Council will seek to identify suitable locations for new facilities throughout the County Borough having regard to the forthcoming guidance.

South Wales Regional Technical Statement on Aggregates

2.26 Minerals Planning Policy Wales (2000) (MPPW) sets out overarching policy guidance for all types of mineral extraction in Wales. It aims to provide positively for the working of minerals resources to meet society's needs by identifying areas for future working where practicable and by safeguarding mineral resources from permanent development that would prevent their future development.

2.27 Within the County Borough there are resources of minerals that potentially need safeguarding through the Local Development Plan. The South Wales Aggregates Working Party Regional Technical Statement will inform this process for Aggregate minerals. This statement will look at environmental capacity across the South Wales region, providing an assessment of the potential of each County Borough Council to contribute to regional demand.

2.28 Minerals Technical Advice Note 2 Coal Consultation Draft advises local planning authorities in respect of safeguarding of coal reserves. The Draft MTAN indicates that the Council should consult with the Coal Authority in respect of the potential economic viability of coal resource areas. Where areas are identified as a result of the consultation these should be assessed for safeguarding in the LDP. Whilst within the County Borough there are acknowledged coal resource areas that could potentially require safeguarding their economic viability and also the potential environmental impacts of extraction may preclude these from being formally safeguarded.

South Wales Regional Transport Plan

2.29 The South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA) is in the process of preparing the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) for South East Wales. Under the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, SEWTA is required to deliver and implement its Regional Transport Plan - a blueprint for sustainable, integrated transport in the region based on policies encouraging social inclusion. The RTP will address cross-boundary issues and provide a policy framework for transport that delivers the Assembly Government's integrated transport strategy.

2.30 It is critical that there is a full and continuous dialogue between SEWTA and the Council during the preparation of the LDP and the RTP, to ensure that there is a clear and unambiguous relationship between policies contained in both documents in order to deliver real transport improvement on the ground that are closely integrated with existing and future land use proposals.

2.31 As an integral part of the preparation of the RTP the Council will review the Transport Strategy contained in the Torfaen County Borough Local Transport Plan. The Preferred Strategy will need to inform the corporate priorities for improvements to the strategic highway network and to the public transport system, in order to ensure that the existing and proposed infrastructure in the County Borough can support the expected levels of economic growth and the distribution of that growth throughout the plan period proposed by the LDP.

Linkages between these documents and implications for the Preferred Strategy.

2.32 The preferred strategy has taken account of and been developed in the context of this evolving regional guidance. The regional plans and studies are in turn helping to inform the Wales Spatial Plan Strategic Planning Document and ensure that the regional framework reflects and supports the developing preferred strategies of Torfaen and the other South East Wales authorities.

Development Plans framework of neighbouring authorities

2.33 The development of the Torfaen LDP is carried out with involvement from neighbouring planning authorities. The existing and developing planning context of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and the Brecon Beacons National Park is therefore included in the process. Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Newport have all recently (2006) had Unitary Development Plans adopted for their areas. Caerphilly and Brecon Beacons National Park whilst not formally adopting their UDP decided to approve the use of the UDP in its present form for all

planning purposes (2003 and 2007 respectively) but to stop any further work on its preparation.

2.34 Blaenau-Gwent, Caerphilly and Brecon Beacons National Park have all commenced work on their LDPs and Torfaen County Borough Council has been involved in this work.

2.35 Joint regional working and the involvement of neighbouring authorities in the development of Torfaen's LDP preferred strategy has ensured that the strategy is in accord with neighbouring authorities developing strategies and is supportive of the regional vision as detailed in the Wales Spatial Plan.

Local Policy Context:

Local Authority Plan Rationalisation

2.36 The local government plan rationalisation exercise by the Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association indicates that the LDP will be one of four main strategies that the Council is required to produce, namely: the Community Strategy, the Local Development Plan, the Health Social Care and Well-Being Strategy, and the Children and Young Peoples Partnership Plan.

Torfaen Community Strategy

2.37 The Torfaen Community Strategy provides the overarching vision and themes under which the Torfaen Local Development Strategy has been developed. The Local Development Plan is to provide the land use strategy and policy for delivering the Community Strategy vision.

Torfaen Community Strategy Vision

Torfaen - the place we want to be

We will make Torfaen the place we want to be by creating opportunities that will make sure that:

- *People are able to work, live and play because they are healthier.*
- *People of all ages and in all areas feel safe.*
- *Through education people are able to make informed choices about their lives.*
- *Residents and businesses have developed their skills to embrace new technologies and global competition whilst treasuring their past.*
- *People appreciate and enjoy the environment.*
- *People are able to find housing in the communities of their choice.*
- *Organisations have a citizen focus*
- *People have an opportunity to make changes and influence organisations*
- *Torfaen and its people are well networked with each other and with the rest of the world*
- *People and organisations working together are the solution to achieving a better quality of life for people in Torfaen.*

2.38 The Torfaen Community Strategy priorities were developed as a result of discussion with the communities of Torfaen. The Community Strategy is based on the following themes:

- *Health & Well-being*
- *Safer Communities*
- *Education and Training for Life*
- *Economy, Jobs & Business*
- *Environment and Transport*
- *Housing & the Homeless*
- *Working Together & Active Citizenship*

Health Social Care and Well Being Strategy

2.39 The strategy identifies the following key priorities:

- *Improve Community Development and empowerment*
- *Improve education, skills and training*
- *Community safety and substance misuse*
- *Support vulnerable adults and carers*
- *Sexual health and teenage pregnancy*
- *Improve Health and social care services.*

2.40 The LDP is recognised as being the policy vehicle to promote a sustainable environment which encourages a healthy and safe lifestyle and promotes well being and access to services and learning/employment opportunities for all. Health issues cross all sectors including housing, employment, recreation, education, transport etc and the LDP aims to ensure health priorities are an implicit part of the strategy.

Torfaen Children and Young People's Plan 2003-2008

2.41 The Framework Plan sets out the five-year strategic vision for all children and young people aged 0 - 25 in Torfaen. It is the key strategic statement of how the well-being of children will be improved between now and 2008. It sets out the jointly agreed strategic aims and the indicators by which we will judge our success. The purpose of the plan is to:

- *Provide vision and direction to all agencies*
- *Ensure all services contribute to the objectives in the plan*
- *Be a strong proactive force to make multi agency working a reality*
- *Focus services and multi agency work on positive results for children, young people and their families*
- *Ensure all services work together and are mutually supportive*
- *Ensure that services continue to meet need across age bands*

2.42 The LDP provides the land use strategy to ensure the needs of young people are met and the inclusion of young people by the creation of opportunities and sustainable communities which cater for all sections of the community.

Torfaen Local Housing Strategy

2.43 Torfaen Local Housing Strategy identifies the following requirements:

- *To continue to foster good links between housing and planning*
- *Formulation of LDP Affordable Housing Policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)*
- *Contribute to policy development on the use of Section 106 planning agreements*
- *To ensure cohesion between Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) and LDP and compatibility of housing/planning policies*
- *Ensure housing is placed in wider planning/economic regeneration context*

2.44 The LDP will need to provide enough land in sustainable areas for a range of housing needs. A particular focus will be to ensure that the provision of affordable housing is based on local need. The LDP will contain appropriate policies to secure affordable housing based on the proven need. As part of LDP process SPG for Affordable housing to be developed to assist the planning process.

Torfaen Regeneration Strategy

2.45 The Torfaen Regeneration Strategy identifies seven objectives to be delivered through the following action programmes:

1. *Establishing a Strong and Sustainable Economy*
2. *Developing People*
3. *Capitalising on Torfaen's Heritage*
4. *Re-energising Town and Neighbourhood Centres*
5. *Investing in Housing, Strengthening Communities, and Tackling social exclusion*
6. *Securing a High Quality Environment*
7. *Raising the Local Regeneration Capacity and capability*

2.46 The LDP must promote a lifelong learning culture and a more sophisticated and enhanced business environment in order to create opportunities in high value-added knowledge-based sectors. The LDP must recognise the importance and the environment and heritage and role in regeneration, and the importance of enhancing communities and reducing social exclusion.

2.47 Individual Regeneration strategies are in development for Blaenavon, Pontypool and Cwmbran and the Local Development Plan will support and provide a framework through which developments in line with the emerging regeneration strategies can be delivered.

Torfaen Local Biodiversity Action Plan

2.48 The Torfaen LBAP requires the protection of a certain species or habitat. This will disallow or limit development on certain sites. Policy needs to ensure that these species and habitats continue to be protected and that the LDP takes into account the number of different regulations in relation to each individual LBAP. Habitat and Species Action Plans are developed to promote the maintenance and enhancement of the habitat.

- 2.49** The LDP must have policy that ensures the protection of all habitats and species that are subject to Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- 2.50** The LDP must recognise the enhancement and protection of biodiversity is a key facet of sustainable development and should be promoted in the LDP.

Draft Plan for Cwmbran Town Centre

- 2.51** In order to facilitate the development of Cwmbran Town Centre before the LDP is adopted, the Council has prepared a Pre-Deposit Local Development Plan: Draft plan for Cwmbran Town Centre in advance of the deposit LDP in recognition of the pressures to develop the town centre and its environs. The plan will inform the emerging LDP and will influence the preferred strategy.

Torfaen Local Development Plan Background Studies:

- 2.52** To provide evidence and support the Local Development Plan a number of background studies have been commissioned. These studies have provided evidence to support the emerging Preferred Strategy and will inform the development of the subsequent Deposit Plan. The studies are:

- Urban Housing Capacity
- Employment Land & Premises
- Phase 1 Habitats
- Retail and Leisure
- Joint Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Local Housing Market Assessment
- LANDMAP/SLA
- Joint Housing Land Availability Study
- Recreation and Open Space
- Regional Waste Sites
- Aggregates Safeguarding
- Coal Safeguarding
- Renewable Energy
- Gypsy Traveller
- North Torfaen Transport Study

- 2.53** Torfaen Local Development Plan is subject to Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Full details of this work will be included in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report (ISAR) and the HRA which accompany the Preferred Strategy.

3. Key Issues in Torfaen

3.1 The ‘Sustainability Appraisal (Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) Draft Scoping Report’ (July 2006) includes a detailed analysis of the economic, social and environmental issues affecting Torfaen. These issues are then further detailed in the ‘Report on the development of the draft Vision and Objectives (January 2007), the Strategic Options Briefing Papers (March 2007) and the ‘Report on the Strategic Options Workshops’ (August 2007).

3.2 The issues are also further developed in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report (ISAR) which accompanies the Preferred Strategy.

Summary

3.3 In considering the spatial opportunities available to achieve the LDP’s Vision and objectives, issues relating to Torfaen’s topography, geography and history are all important.

3.4 Torfaen County Borough is related to the Afon Lwyd valley which is the eastern most valley in the South Wales coalfield. The County Borough stretches from the northern hills down through Pontypool to the New town area of Cwmbran.

3.5 In analysing the issues that affect Torfaen the County Borough can be considered in relation to 3 distinctive areas which broadly relate to the separate Housing Market Areas and also the developing areas in the Wales Spatial Plan Strategic Development Project. These areas are:

- North Torfaen comprising Blaenavon and Abersychan Wards which relates to the Heads of the Valleys area,
- Pontypool and surroundings which relates to the Connections Corridor, and
- Cwmbran which lies close to the coastal belt.

Topography and geography

3.6 North Torfaen – This area is characterised by the upland landscape at the head of the Afon Lwyd valley. The settlement of Blaenavon is located primarily on the eastern side of the valley at over 1000’ in altitude. Further south the valley steepens and narrows as it stretches to the settlements of Cwmavon, Varteg and Abersychan.

3.7 Mid Torfaen/Pontypool - North of Pontypool the Valley is still steep and is occupied by the settlements such as Pontnewynydd, Trevethin and The Tranch. This area is joined by a number of subsidiary valleys joining from the west including the more outlying regions of Tir Pentwys, Pantygasseg and rural areas surrounding the former coalfield area to the west,. To the south of Pontypool the main valley starts to open up and includes the flatter eastern area out towards Mamhilad.

3.8 Cwmbran – The New Town of Cwmbran lies in the lower Afon Lwyd valley area where the valley is significantly shallower and wider than further north.

Physical capacity

3.9 North and mid Torfaen - The altitude and steep nature of North Torfaen combined with the large scale of development of these areas in the 19 and 20

century associated with the iron and coal industries means that the majority of readily developable and accessible sites have previously been developed. Regeneration and brownfield opportunities will therefore present a significant element of the potential development area in this location. Opportunities will be constrained and where they do exist there may be significant conflicting interests in relation to development options.

3.10 Cwmbran – While Cwmbran occupies a shallower section of the valley undeveloped areas to the west are increasingly elevated and sloping constraining development in this area. Rural areas lie to the south and west with the A4042 forming the main eastern boundary to existing development, although areas such as New Inn, Mamhilad Business Park and Llanfrechfa and Ponthir lie in this area. The areas of South Sebastopol and Craig-y-felin are currently undeveloped areas to the north of Cwmbran.

Transport and Infrastructure

3.11 The Afon Lwyd valley shapes the main transport and infrastructure corridors with main routes predominantly running north-south. The A4042 Trunk road and also the main rail route cover the southern area but then branch off to the east just to the south of Pontypool. The A472 provides the only significant east-west transport corridor linking into the trunk road south of Pontypool. North Torfaen is linked to the Heads of the Valleys corridor by routes to the north but significant problems exist in transport infrastructure linking this area to the south.

Heritage

3.12 Blaenavon is designated as a World Heritage site and there are significant other heritage assets which arise from the areas past particularly relating to its historic association with the iron and coal industries. The careful management of these assets as well as the maintenance of the local distinctiveness of the area are important in ensuring the character of Torfaen is protected and enhanced.

Housing

3.13 Increasing house prices and the corresponding lack of affordable housing in Torfaen have the potential to threaten the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities throughout the area. Ensuring that people have access to housing opportunities in their area will facilitate community cohesion and support a sustainable pattern of development.

Ecology

3.14 The linear nature of the development form in Torfaen following the valley bottom means that there is an almost unbroken urban spine of development from Llantarnam to Talywain. The importance of a network of green space and ecological corridors flowing through this area is therefore seen as a key issue in supporting ecological interests through Torfaen.

Other spatial opportunities or constraints

3.15 The northern and mid areas of Torfaen comprises communities historically formed around the iron and coal industries, Whilst historically independent, deindustrialisation and associated depopulation means increasingly there has been a need for employment and services to be accessed outside these areas. Topographical and access issues constrain development opportunities and therefore it is important to maximise the benefits of development opportunities where they arise and provide appropriate services to facilitate a more sustainable future for this area.

3.16 The geographical character of Cwmbran provides opportunities to promote a more sustainable pattern of development. All suburban areas can readily access the town centre which is in relatively close proximity. The centre itself has reasonable range of services within a compact area and positive opportunities exist for expanding this role. There are opportunities to integrate new development with existing settlement patterns helping to ensure that homes, jobs, services, recreation and cultural activities are readily accessible and potentially more viable.

3.17 The prime challenges facing Torfaen relate to ensuring the supporting infrastructure and development opportunities exist to promote a more sustainable future. In particular improving access to the north of Torfaen as well as securing investment in supporting infrastructure is seen as a key issue in supporting a more sustainable development pattern for the area.

4. Torfaen LDP Vision and Objectives

Summary

4.1 The LDP vision and objectives have been informed by the results of workshops held during October and November 2006 and subsequent stakeholder representations on the Draft Vision statement and Objectives which were issued for consultation for a period of 3 weeks from January 10th - January 31st 2007. Following the results of this consultation exercise, a revised vision statement and LDP objectives were prepared, which are identified below. The development of the Vision and Objectives is contained within the report 'Torfaen LDP Vision and Objectives (May 2007)'.

Purpose of the Vision and Objectives

4.2 In considering how the LDP for Torfaen should tackle key issues and guide and manage future development, it is important that a clear vision of what the County Borough should look like in 15 years time is identified.

4.3 In the identification of a vision due regard has been made to the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) in accordance with guidance as outlined by the LDP Manual 2006 which states "***The Wales Spatial Plan provides the overarching policy framework for the preparation of Laps. Local Planning authorities are required to have regard to both the vision and propositions set out in the document***" (Para 2.33, LDP Manual 2006).

4.4 Similarly, the LDP must emanate from the relevant Community Strategy for the local authority as outlined by Local Development Plans Wales 2005, (Para. 2.10) which states "***The LDP should be based on a vision of the future which should be clear, realistic and based on the objectives and priorities of the relevant community strategy***". It is further identified by the Local Development Plan Manual 2006 (Para 2.3.3) that the '***challenge is for LDP's to provide the land use expression of the shared vision of the community strategy of how an area will develop, change or be conserved. The vision should be well rounded so that there should be a balance between economic, social and environmental objectives***'. The emerging vision and objectives have been developed with significant consideration of the objectives and priorities of the Torfaen Community Strategy.

4.5 The LDP Manual (2006) indicates that the LDP objectives should be capable of being addressed through the planning system. Therefore the LDP Objectives aim to deliver through land use planning the aims and objectives of the Torfaen Community Strategy.

TORFAEN LDP VISION STATEMENT

“By 2021, through collaborative working, the development strategy for the Torfaen Local Development Plan will deliver planned, sustainable growth reflecting the specific role and function of settlements. It will provide a distinctive, vibrant and prosperous area where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life in safe, healthy and thriving communities with accessible local facilities. It will promote the sustainable regeneration of our town centres ensuring they are a focus for social, commercial and community life, whilst also protecting and enhancing Torfaen’s unique natural heritage and cultural and historic identity”.

TORFAEN LDP OBJECTIVES

Summary

4.6 The following 19 LDP Objectives have been devised so that they can deliver through land use terms the relevant community strategy objectives, contained in the Torfaen Community Strategy Vision.

LDP Objectives

- 1. To ensure the allocation of an appropriate quantity and range of employment sites to support high and stable levels of employment in Torfaen and deliver a competitive, modern and sustainable economy and retail centres.**
- 2. To promote health and well being through the provision of community facilities, leisure and outdoor recreational opportunities, accessible to all.**
- 3. To ensure that the location of development does not result in unacceptable risk from flooding, subsidence or health hazards.**
- 4. To ensure the highest quality of design in all developments and delivering safe and attractive environments.**
- 5. To provide opportunities for the establishment of a network of quality educational facilities which serve local communities and are accessible for all sections of the current and future population.**
- 6. To protect, manage and enhance sustainable tourist attractions and facilities in Torfaen for the benefit of tourists and the community.**
- 7. To conserve and enhance the distinctive cultural and historic resources of the County Borough.**
- 8. To ensure that all new development reflects best practise in sustainable design and location, construction and operation.**

- 9. To allocate mineral sites if required and safeguard appropriate mineral resources from sterilisation.**
- 10. To protect, manage and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks across Torfaen.**
- 11. To minimise climate change impacts through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases in both new and existing development.**
- 12. To protect and enhance the valued landscape character of Torfaen, including important open space and sense of rurality between settlements.**
- 13. To protect Greenfield land by enabling and promoting the most efficient use of brownfield sites for redevelopment across Torfaen.**
- 14. To ensure all development contributes to improving water quality, protecting water supply and maximising the efficiency of water consumption.**
- 15. To identify and conserve important soil and geological resources including Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and maintain their quality.**
- 16. To ensure the allocation of an appropriate quantity and variety of housing sites to deliver high quality choice in sustainable locations, well served by essential facilities and accessible by a range of transport modes.**
- 17. To ensure that necessary opportunities are available for people to engage and contribute to the planning process.**
- 18. To develop integrated and efficient transport infrastructure, public transport and communication networks which are accessible and attractive to all, and encourage a reduction in private car use.**
- 19. To ensure people and organisations reduce, reuse and recycle waste and to foster this through the provision of regional and local waste management facilities.**

5. Spatial Strategy Options

5.1 Consultation workshops were held during March and April 2007 to seek stakeholder input into the generation of Strategic Options for the Local Development Plan. Key Stakeholder events were held on the 26th and the 28th March 2007 followed by an Elected Members event held on the 16th April 2007.

5.2 Prior to the Workshop sessions, attendees were provided with a set of Draft Strategic Options which would be discussed during the day. The development of an initial draft set of options by the LDP team was considered important in order to allow stakeholders the opportunity to develop and critique these options and offer new options during the workshop sessions. Attendees were also given the Strategic Options Briefing Papers (March 2007) highlighting issues to be considered when making representations on the Draft Strategic Options.

5.3 Results from the workshop sessions were integral to the development of the Torfaen LDP Strategic Options and full details of this process are contained in the 'Report on the Strategic Options Workshops' August 2007.

The Strategic Spatial Scenarios or options considered are detailed below:

URBAN CONTAINMENT STRATEGY

5.4 This would involve ensuring development is accommodated within the existing urban boundaries, resulting in no expansion of the urban area as defined on the adopted Torfaen Local Plan. The strategy would focus on increasing the density of development in local areas that offer opportunities for growth and expansion. This strategy would seek to exploit development on previously developed land and therefore would allow for growth in areas with opportunities for Brownfield development.

REGENERATION FOCUS STRATEGY

5.5 This strategy would focus development growth in areas of greatest need. Development would be concentrated to address the existing needs of specific settlements, and a dispersed form of growth would be encouraged. This would focus on delivering a holistic strategy addressing the social, economic and environmental needs of Torfaen. The strategy would direct investment and development to those areas in most need of community regeneration and the council has already identified the north of the County Borough (north of Pontypool, including Pontypool, Wainfelin, Cwmwynscoy, Abersychan, Garndiffaith, Talywain, Varteg, Cwmavon and Blaenavon) as the areas most in need of regeneration.

MARKET LED STRATEGY

5.6 In this strategy market demand would be a key determinant on the scale and location of development in the County Borough. This strategy would maximise investment and development opportunities, improving overall economic growth levels for the County Borough. For Torfaen, this strategy would have a greater emphasis on the South and would result in growth to the South of the County Borough (south of Pontymoel, including Cwmbran, Ponthir, Llanfrechfa, Griffithstown/Sebastopol and New Inn). This is evidenced by the fact that this area has attracted the majority of

the house building and industrial development over the past 20 years. Demand to live and work in this part of the County Borough is evidently greater than other parts of Torfaen, due to its attractive setting and proximity to job opportunities, shops and other facilities.

NETWORK OF INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

5.7 The strategy would aim to ensure a network of integrated communities spreading growth in prosperity from the two key settlements of Cwmbran and Pontypool to the rest of the settlements across Torfaen. These settlements must be successful in their own right, with strong retail and leisure sectors and function as service hubs for surrounding settlements. In the development of this strategy housing growth, new employment sites and retail and leisure development should be at locations that are well served by public transport. It will need to be recognised that market factors will mean that most employment growth will be likely to be in the south of the County Borough. This strategy would recognise this but seek to steer strategic developments to locations that are easily accessible to people using public transport in all settlements. Importantly, to improve integration with settlements in the north of the County Borough, opportunities emanating from the Heads of the Valleys programme should be realised.

5.8 As part of the development of the 4 draft scenarios discussed above, other strategy options were considered, but were ruled out as it was considered that they were neither Realistic nor Sustainable.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES CONSIDERED

CONSOLIDATION STRATEGY

5.9 This strategy would have involved consolidating development in the South of the County Borough, accommodating development to satisfy local needs only. The principal aim of this strategy therefore would be to encourage growth in the North of the County Borough in Pontypool and Blaenavon and their surrounding communities and maximise regeneration opportunities in these areas. This would help address population decline in the northern parts of the County Borough and help to achieve a more balanced level of growth in Torfaen, from Cwmbran in the south to Blaenavon in the North. Considering this strategy would run contrary to market demand it is considered that this strategy could accommodate a low housing provision, accommodating approximately 5000 dwellings in Torfaen through the 15 year period till 2021. This strategy would therefore be a low growth option.

CONTINUATION OF EXISTING STRATEGY

5.10 This strategy would continue the existing strategy of the Adopted Torfaen Local Plan. The key principles of the local plan strategy sought to ensure that development within the County Borough is sustainable and protects non-renewable and finite resources for future generations, ensuring the best possible use of land for the benefit of the community, safeguarding and improving the quality of life for communities in Torfaen, and promoting a balance of development between the north and south of the County Borough.

Consideration of Potential Strategies

5.11 The 4 finalised options were developed further and formed the basis for the consideration of alternative options.

5.12 Urban Containment Strategy

This would involve ensuring development is accommodated within the existing urban boundaries, resulting in no expansion of the urban area as defined on the adopted Torfaen Local Plan.

- Exploitation of brownfield opportunities
- Increase in density of development
- Utilise/improve existing infrastructure
- Reduce impact of development on the countryside.
- Sustain existing service provision.
- Growth opportunities restricted
- Development to provide necessary infrastructure improvements
- It is anticipated that the Urban Containment Strategy could accommodate mid to high housing provision between 6600 to 7250 dwellings

Summary of developing issues:

- Minimises new 'greenfield' land take for development
- Sustain and improve existing services and facilities by locating new developments within existing settlements
- Increases urban density placing pressure on amenity and privacy issues
- Major Opportunities for new investment potentially missed
- Pressure on competing land uses (maintaining ecological corridors, network of POS, protecting employment land)
- Increase in congestion and pressure on existing transport networks and drainage systems

5.13 Market Led Strategy

This strategy would adopt a non intervention approach where the scale and location of development would be dictated by market forces. This strategy would maximise investment and development opportunities, improving overall economic growth levels for the County Borough.

- large-scale growth in the south which would reflect previous and ongoing development pressures and rates of growth. Development in the north would be limited in comparison.
- There will be a focus on improving economic prosperity by capitalising on the M4 corridor opportunities through improving transport links to these areas.
- pressure for Greenfield development within the south of the County Borough
- place pressure on the ability to secure/retain lower value uses in particular areas such as employment uses
- It is anticipated that the Market led strategy would be based on a mid to high growth option, capable of accommodating between 6600 - 7250 dwellings
- Socially inequitable

Summary of developing issues:

- New developments provide opportunities for efficient new buildings

- Growth in residential and economic development sectors supports the needs of existing and future population locally reducing the need for commuting.
- Benefits of growth will support new services
- Increased congestion and pressure on environmental resources in the south
- Lack of demand in north will threaten viability of communities
- Inequitable provision of new development and associated services

5.14 Regeneration Focus Strategy

This strategy would focus development growth in areas of greatest need. Development would be concentrated to address the existing needs of specific settlements, and a dispersed form of growth would be encouraged.

- Increased emphasis on enabling development - allowing greenfield and economic development opportunities where necessary.
- Removing barriers to investment including focusing on improving transport links to the settlements to the north, and encouraging development into these areas
- particular focus on Pontypool in providing a greater role in service provision
- focus on the exploitation of refurbishment and redevelopment opportunities
- To achieve strategy there would need to be some element of restricting development in the south to redirect development northwards
- It is anticipated that the Regeneration Strategy could accommodate a mid housing provision of around 6600 dwellings
- Links with Heads of Valleys strategy and investment needed

Summary of developing issues:

- Support for existing Communities and local distinctiveness
- Focus of development on integrating with and improving existing built environment
- Need for support and investment to support less optimal market solutions
- Responsive and efficient developments based on local needs
- Potential low level of overall growth restricting new opportunities
- Need for investment in transport infrastructure in north

5.15 Network of Integrated Communities

The strategy would aim to ensure a network of integrated communities spreading growth and prosperity from the two key settlements of Cwmbran and Pontypool to the rest of the settlements across Torfaen. These settlements must be successful in their own right, with strong retail, commercial and leisure sectors and function as service hubs for surrounding settlements

- This strategy option would involve the concentration of growth in several key areas which could potentially provide benefits of scale in terms of infrastructure improvements and enhance existing communities by provision of an appropriate mix of uses.
- focusing growth in locations where wider benefits are more likely to occur.
- effective transport links to and from jobs and services that cannot be available locally. The settlements will grow according to their individual capacity, role and function and through the integration with each other will develop a strategy where each settlement builds upon its distinct opportunities for the benefit of the County Borough as a whole

- emphasising development around key transport routes and development to reflect the role, scale and function of individual settlements. Expanded settlements potentially including greenfield sites to cater for local needs

Summary of developing issues:

- Focus of development and services around town and local centres
- Complimentary functions for settlements reducing inefficient competition
- Local distinctiveness and character of areas promoted
- Protection of local centres
- Need for investment in transport infrastructure
- Restricted opportunities and consequent pressure on public open space network and often important ecological corridors

Overview of assessment of the options

5.16 As a general overview each strategy option was scored as to whether it would have a positive or negative impact in achieving each of the sustainability objectives. It is important that the Preferred Strategy for the LDP is sustainable in terms of achieving economic, environmental and social objectives. Therefore this exercise enables the identification of the sustainability implications of each strategy option. A more detailed analysis of how the strategies related to each of the sustainability objectives is detailed in the ISAR.

5.17 In summary it was noted that there were noticeable differences between each of the four options in terms of their relative performance against the three dimensions of sustainability. All options tended to perform more favourably against the economic and social objectives as opposed to their performance against the environmental objectives. In the assessment of the options in the paragraphs following, the options relate to the following strategies:

- Option 1 – Urban Containment Strategy
- Option 2 – Market Led Strategy
- Option 3 – Regeneration Focus Strategy
- Option 4 - Network Of Integrated Communities Strategy

5.18 There are noticeable differences between each of the four options in terms of their relative performance against the three dimensions of sustainability. In addition, there are varying effects in relation to the three dimensions of sustainability, with all options performing slightly better in relation to the economic and social dimensions than they do against the objectives related to the environmental dimension, though 3 of the 4 options do perform fairly well in this category, having equally both positive and negative effects, depending on implementation.

5.19 From an economic perspective, options 3 and 4 are considered to have the potential for the greatest positive effects as, in supporting mid- high levels of growth across the Borough, they enable the spread of employment opportunities more evenly in spatial terms and seek to capitalise on new transport corridors. Options 3 and 4 also support increased town centre regeneration and vitality, which is important from a social perspective. The approach of options 3 and 4 potentially including Greenfield sites where needed, and the concentration of growth in several key areas has benefits in terms of economies of scale and in removing barriers to investment; allowing economic development opportunities where need is greatest. This is particularly in contrast to Option 2, which will result in patterns of development that

respond to market demands as opposed to community need. Option 4 has a slightly higher level of housing provision than Option 3, potentially allowing for a greater variety of housing.

5.20 From an environmental perspective, option 2 is the most likely to have the potential for the most negative effects, as market led development is likely to increase pressure on Greenfield Sites and floodplains, to a greater extent than the other options. Option 1 and, to a greater extent, option 3 and 4 are considered to have the potential for the greatest positive effects, (depending on the implementation of these options) due to reliance upon existing settlement boundaries which, especially in the case of option 1, would effectively constrain the expansion of development into Greenfield areas. However, in essence, all of the options involve adverse effects arising from a combination of transport movements, loss of productive soils to development pressure, increased risk of water and air pollution, likely severance of habitats and negative effects on biodiversity. In all cases, these negative effects are likely to require avoidance and mitigation.

5.21 From a social perspective, all options are assessed as having the potential for moderate positive effects on the basis that, to differing degrees, they will deliver regeneration benefits to key settlements, support improved accessibility to facilities and services and help to protect local character; however, options 3 and 4 are considered to have the greatest potential to deliver more positive than negative effects and thus these represent the best of the options, with Option 4 considered to have the most positive effects. Primarily, this is due to the fact that both options seek to spread regeneration benefits more evenly around the County than options 1 and 2, thus providing social benefits to a wider cross-section of the County's population and seeking to better address spatial disparities, particularly between the north and the south of the County. .

Conclusion

5.22 In conclusion, considering the balance of the assessments against the three dimensions of sustainability, it is option 4 that appears to offer the greatest potential for beneficial effects against the full range of social, environmental and economic objectives. The Network of Integrated Communities Strategy has therefore been selected to be taken forward as the Preferred Strategy for the LDP

6. Preferred Strategy

The Network of Integrated Communities Strategy

6.1 This strategy would aim to ensure a network of integrated communities, focusing particularly on the two key settlements of Cwmbran and Pontypool to ensure that they are successful and function as service hubs for the surrounding settlements. Growth is focused in locations where wider benefits are likely to occur, for example to realise the regeneration potential of the British site and Cwmbran Town Centre. Effective transport links must be forged to and from jobs and services which are not available locally. Development would be emphasised along key transport routes and would reflect the role, scale and function of individual settlements - with each settlement building upon its particular opportunities for the benefit of the County Borough as a whole. Expanded settlements may potentially include Greenfield land. This strategy is anticipated to accommodate mid to high housing provision of 6600 - 7000 dwellings.

6.2 This strategy would seek to achieve affordable housing on new development sites which would be consistent across the County Borough. The potential of the growth hubs of Cwmbran and Pontypool would be realised, alongside realising the role of key settlements including the tourism potential of Blaenavon. This strategy would seek to ensure that key services and facilities are accessible to the County Borough as a whole and as such the location of a strategic service provision would be focused centrally. Improvements to existing facilities would be sought to reduce disparities between settlements and improvements in accessibility to key services would be directed to ensure access for all, which will assist in reducing social inequality and disorder and make communities more self sufficient.

6.3 Relating the strategy to the identified areas of North Torfaen, Pontypool and Cwmbran the central hubs of Cwmbran, Pontypool and Blaenavon will have a key role in providing local services for their surrounding areas. Cwmbran as the largest settlement also has the potential to provide a wider regional role for facilities and services. Transport connections between the hubs will be key in realising this strategy.

6.4 Developments outside the central areas will need to link to existing service centres or have good access to these facilities. Where existing services do not currently exist developments will be required to ensure local services can be provided and accessed so as to ensure developing communities can be successfully integrated.

6.5 Housing - Following from the SEWSPG Memorandum of Understanding, in order to maintain Torfaen's current share of population in South East Wales and to meet predicted housing need, the LDP Preferred Strategy is that over the period 2006 - 2021, make provision for 7,000 new dwellings in Torfaen primarily within the existing settlements and with a preference for brownfield sites,

- of which:
 - 900 dwellings in North Torfaen Housing Market Area (Blaenavon and Abersychan Wards);
 - 2,800 dwellings in Pontypool Housing Market Area; and
 - 3,300 dwellings in Cwmbran Housing Market Area.
- and made up from:

- 2,800 dwellings on sites already allocated, permitted or under construction (Jan 2006 JHLAS);
- 3,400 dwellings on New Site Allocations (10 or more dwellings);
- 400 dwellings in a ‘Windfall Allowance’; and
- 400 dwellings on Small Sites (9 or less dwellings).
- with all Demolitions to be net against this target.

6.6 Sites are to be identified against the Candidate Sites Assessment Methodology; which will include a preference for appropriate brownfield land, sustainable development principles and a sequential site selection process, firstly from within the urban area and then urban extensions, taking into account economic viability, accessibility & ease of movement, environmental assets, site context & character, continuity & enclosure and the proposed use.

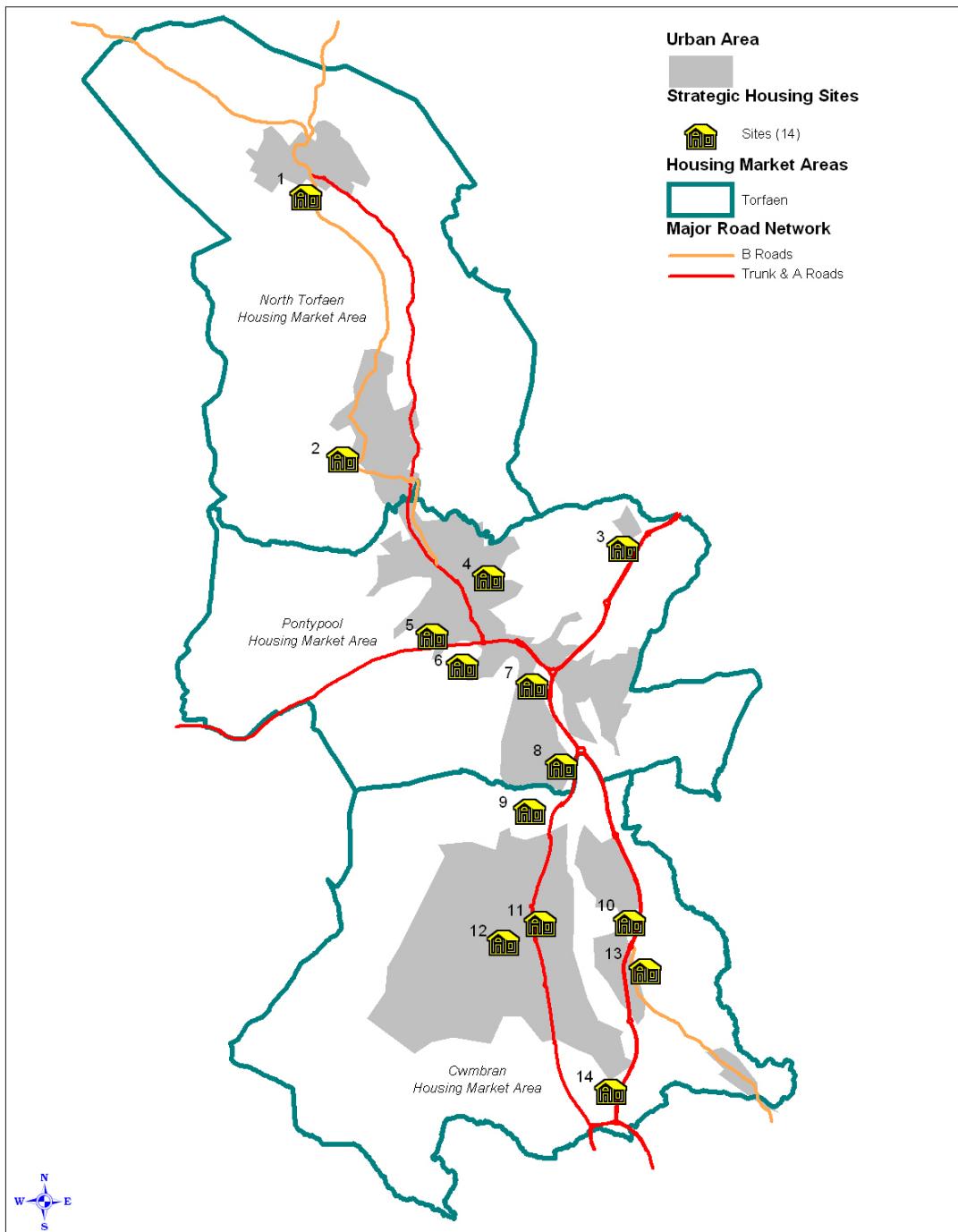
6.7 The LDP proposes the following Strategic Housing Sites, detailed in Figure 1. (of 100 or more dwellings): -

- 1 Boral Edenhall & Candlewick Sites, Blaenavon;
- 2 The British, Talywain;
- 4 Trevethin Comprehensive School;
- 5 Rear of Twmpath Road / Dog Pound, Tranch, Pontypool;
- 6 Pontypool College;
- 3 Mamhilad New Village, Nr Pontypool;
- 7& 8 Possibly County Hospital or Panteg Steelworks;
- 9 South Sebastopol, Cwmbran;
- 12 Former Police College & adjacent land, Cwmbran;
- 10 County Hall, Cwmbran;
- 13 Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital;
- 14 Malthouse Lane, Llantarnam, Cwmbran; and
- 11 Cwmbran Town Centre

6.8 The LDP will contain a policy to negotiate an element of Affordable Housing against evidence from the latest Local Housing Market Assessment, with the strategy of Social Housing Grant (SHG) being targeted to all sites in North Torfaen and Pontypool Housing Market Areas and in the Cwmbran Housing Market Area when the Development Appraisal Toolkit shows a site to be uneconomic without the use of SHG.

6.9 Following the completion of the Torfaen Gypsy-Traveller Study, consideration will be given to identifying new Gypsy Traveller sites (both permanent and transit) in the Deposit LDP.

6.10 The preferred strategy is to create sustainable communities throughout Torfaen principally based on the 3 main settlements of Cwmbran, Pontypool and Blaenavon. Housing growth areas need to recognise and tackle housing need and be integrated with existing communities. Where new housing areas are proposed these should as far as possible promote sustainable living by providing appropriate services as well as by integrating with and supporting existing settlements and services through good quality access arrangements.



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Torfaen LDP - Preferred Strategy

Key Diagram - Housing



Duncan Smith
Chief Officer
Planning & Public Protection

Figure 1 - Housing

6.11 Employment - The LDP Preferred Strategy is that over the period 2006-2021 the plan will identify 60ha of land for general employment purposes within the urban area. A key requirement is to ensure a choice and range of sites allowing opportunities throughout Torfaen.

6.12 Sites are to be identified using the Candidate Sites Assessment Methodology which will include a preference for proximity to urban developments, market viability and sustainable development principles including access.

6.13 Existing key employment areas will be identified and retained for these purposes whilst allowing for appropriate redevelopment and diversification to adapt to changing business requirements and needs.

6.14 The LDP proposes the following Strategic Employment Sites: -

- 1 Kays & Kears, Blaenavon;
- 2 The British, Pontypool;
- 3 Mamhilad, Pontypool;
- 4 Panteg Steelworks, (South), Pontypool;
- 5 Craig y Felin, Cwmbran;
- 6 Llantarnam, Cwmbran.

6.15 Redevelopment at both Pontypool and Cwmbran town centres will provide opportunities for new employment development as part of these schemes.

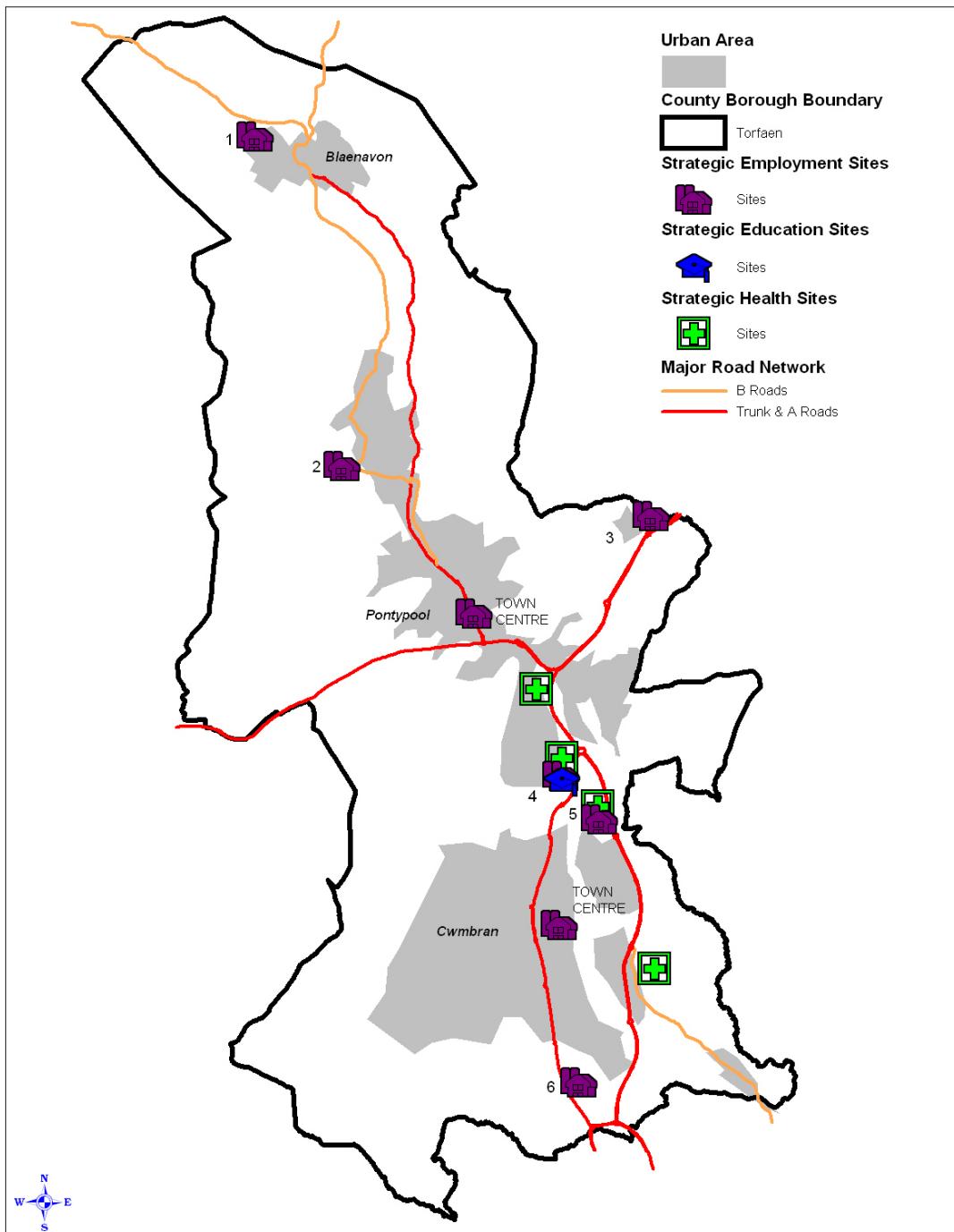
6.16 While the strategy recognises that not all Torfaen's employment needs can be met locally, each community needs to provide local employment opportunities as well as enabling access through efficient transport networks to employment opportunities elsewhere, in particular the main centres.

6.17 Health & Education - The LDP will: -

- identify land at Panteg Steelworks for a potential relocation of Pontypool College;
- identify land for the new 450 bed Gwent Specialist Critical Care Centre (SCCC) at Llanfrechfa Grange, Cwmbran;
- identify land for a new local general hospital at the County Hospital site (redevelopment) or Panteg Steelworks (South); and
- use Section 106 Agreements to fund education improvements.

6.18 While the strategy recognises that not all Torfaen's health and education needs can be met locally, each community needs to have access to basic health services and primary education facilities nearby as well as enabling access through efficient transport networks to higher level health and education opportunities elsewhere, in particular the main centres.

6.19 Due to the strategic importance of the NHS Trust's proposals for a new Specialist Critical Care Centre at Llanfrechfa Grange a framework for the delivery of the SCCC has been prepared. The framework prepared by the Health Trust is intended to provide for the holistic development of the site ensuring that the development is appropriate to its setting and ensuring that the development is integrated both with the proposed strategic housing proposal and existing community.



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Torfaen LDP - Preferred Strategy

Key Diagram - Development



Duncan Smith
Chief Officer
Planning & Public Protection

Figure 2 - Employment, Education and Health

6.19 Transport - The LDP will define the primary and core road and transport hierarchy in Torfaen. The issue of road bottlenecks & solutions will be addressed in the Deposit LDP following the completion of the North Torfaen Highway Study.

The LDP will also: -

- safeguard land for a Pontypool Park & Ride Train Station ;
- have an emphasis on Public Transport, Cycling & Walking schemes rather than road improvements;
- ensure that development should take measures to reduce the need to travel, the reliance on the motor car and be located at or on transport nodes / corridors; and
- use mitigatory Section 106 agreements to fund transport improvements.

6.20 Efficient and reliable transport connections between settlements are essential to provide the network of integrated communities that the strategy proposes. Not all areas will possess all the opportunities and services required for independent living and therefore easy access to other areas where these exist is required for a sustainable future.

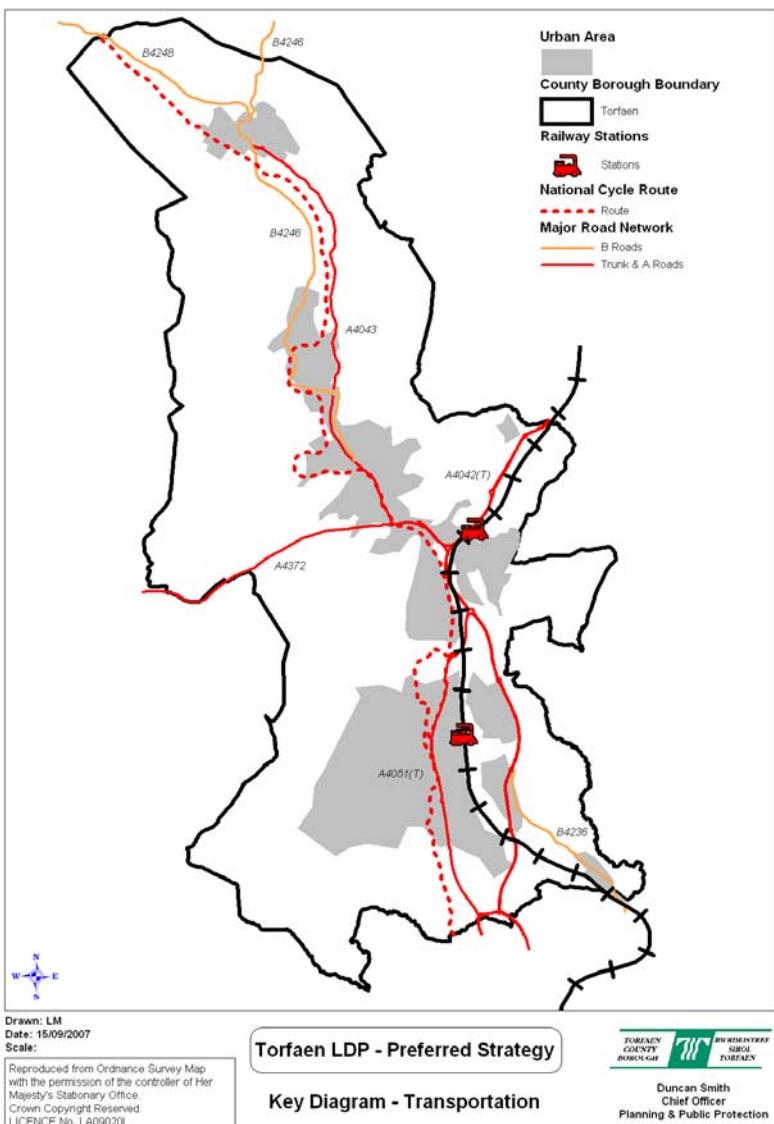


Figure 3 - Transport

6.21 Retailing - The LDP will protect & enhance local centres and define the following retail hierarchy and role and function of each town centre: -

- Blaenavon - Consolidate this District Shopping Centre;
- Pontypool - Consolidate this District Shopping Centre; and
- Cwmbran - Expand this Sub-Regional Shopping Centre.

6.22 Pontypool and Blaenavon centres need to consolidate their role in providing local services for the surrounding areas. Cwmbran's role as a sub-regional centre needs to be protected and enhanced to support the provision of higher level services and facilities within Torfaen. Connections between the centres should be a priority of the strategy in order that everyone can access them easily and they can fulfil their role and function as the main source of services and community and cultural life.

6.23 Leisure & Recreation - The LDP will: -

- protect formal leisure facilities and the various typologies of open space and ensure new provision from development sites, including the use of S106 contributions; and
- based upon a study yet to be commissioned, devise a Torfaen specific recreation and open space standard.

6.24 While the strategy recognises that not all Torfaen's leisure and recreation needs can be met locally, each community needs to have access to leisure and recreation opportunities ,in particular outdoor green space, as well as enabling access through efficient transport networks to more formal opportunities elsewhere, in particular the main centres.

6.25 Climate Change and Sustainable Development - The LDP will mitigate further climate change and also adapt to those effects of climate change which are already inevitable by: -

- prioritising the allocation of development sites which form part of a sustainable settlement pattern, i.e.
 - not building in areas at risk from flooding or land instability; and
 - prioritising the development of urban and brownfield sites.

6.26 The LDP will also: -

- require a minimum 10% reduction in CO₂ emissions (to the BREEAM Good level) from all major new developments;
- require a financial contribution from all non BREEAM Excellent (40% reduction in CO₂ emissions) developments to improve the carbon footprint of existing buildings;
- require development to be resource efficient;
- require development to consider small to medium renewable energy generation;
- ensure that developments are designed to be resilient to the likely future effects of climate change; and
- maintain habitat connectivity to allow wildlife to adapt to a changing climate.

6.27 Ecology and Biodiversity - The LDP will identify, protect and link the following ecological corridors:

- Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal;
- Afon Lwyd River; and
- National Cycle Route 42.

6.28 The LDP will also protect and enhance important international, national, regional and local species and habitats, including: -

- European Protected Species;
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR); and
- Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC).

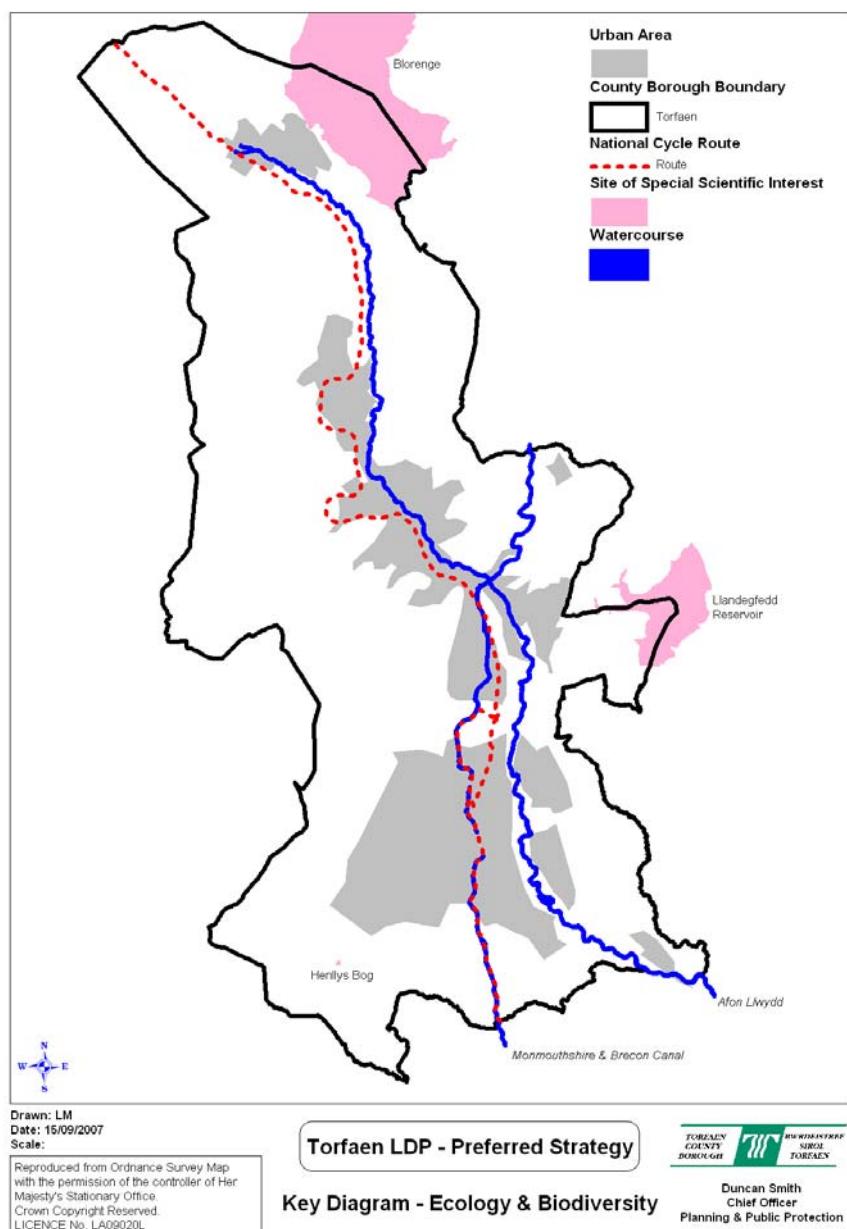


Figure 4 - Ecology and Biodiversity

6.29 Landscape - The LDP will:

- protect and enhance the Blaenavon World Heritage Site;
- identify new Special Landscape Areas following the LANDMAP Study;
- identify Green Wedges between: -
- Cwmbran / Newport; -
- Mamhilad / New Inn; and -
- Ponthir / Caerleon, and
- designate Important Urban Open Spaces in the Deposit LDP, following the yet to be commissioned review Study.

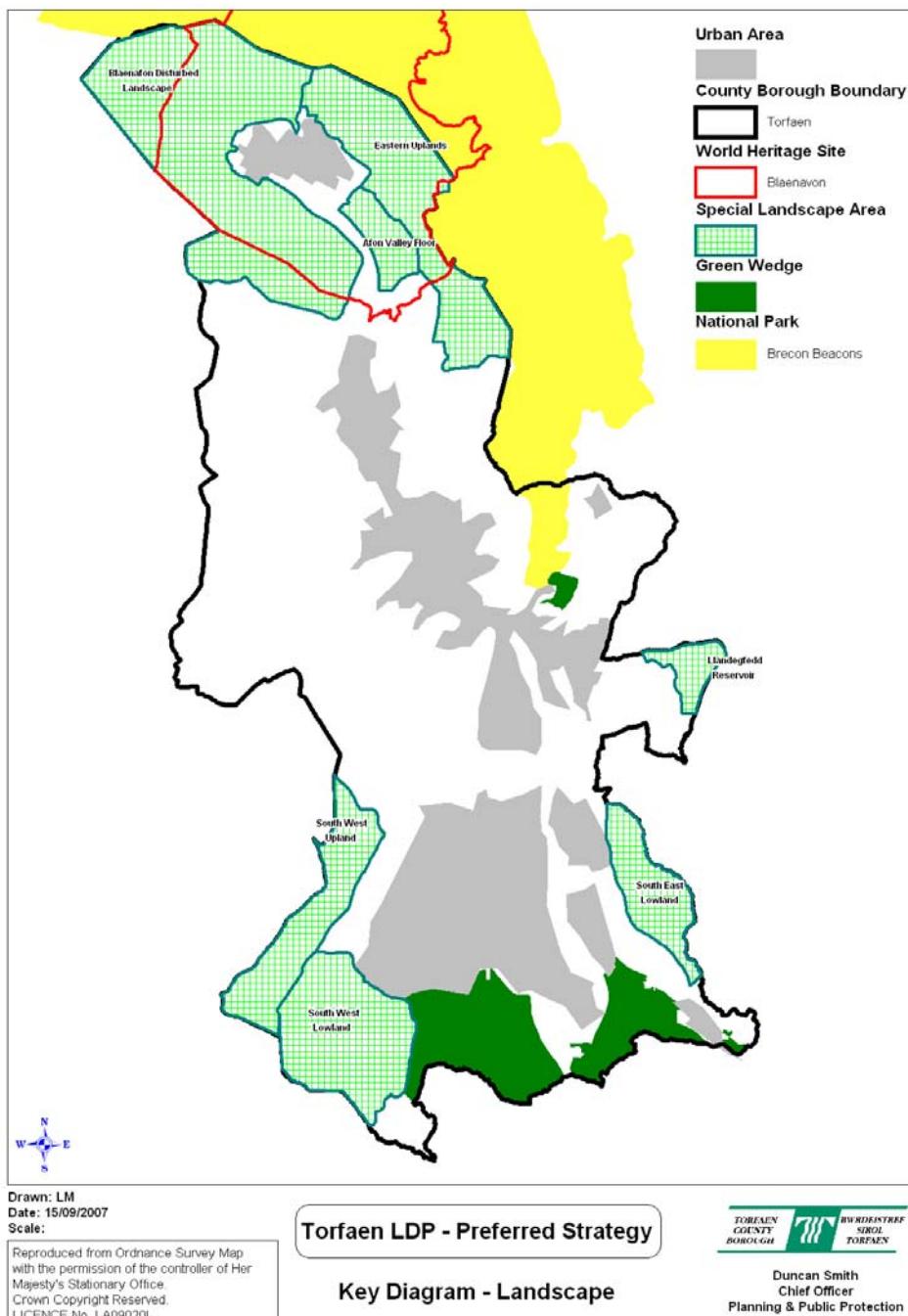


Figure 5 - Landscape

6.30 Heritage - The LDP will: -

- preserve and enhance the important cultural and historical identity of Torfaen;
- require that development proposals consider listed buildings and their setting, conservation areas, heritage assets and local character and distinctiveness;
- acknowledge and promote the following strategic heritage assets: -
 - Blaenavon World Heritage Site/Historic Landscape;
 - Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal;
 - Pontypool Park; and
 - five existing Conservation Areas.

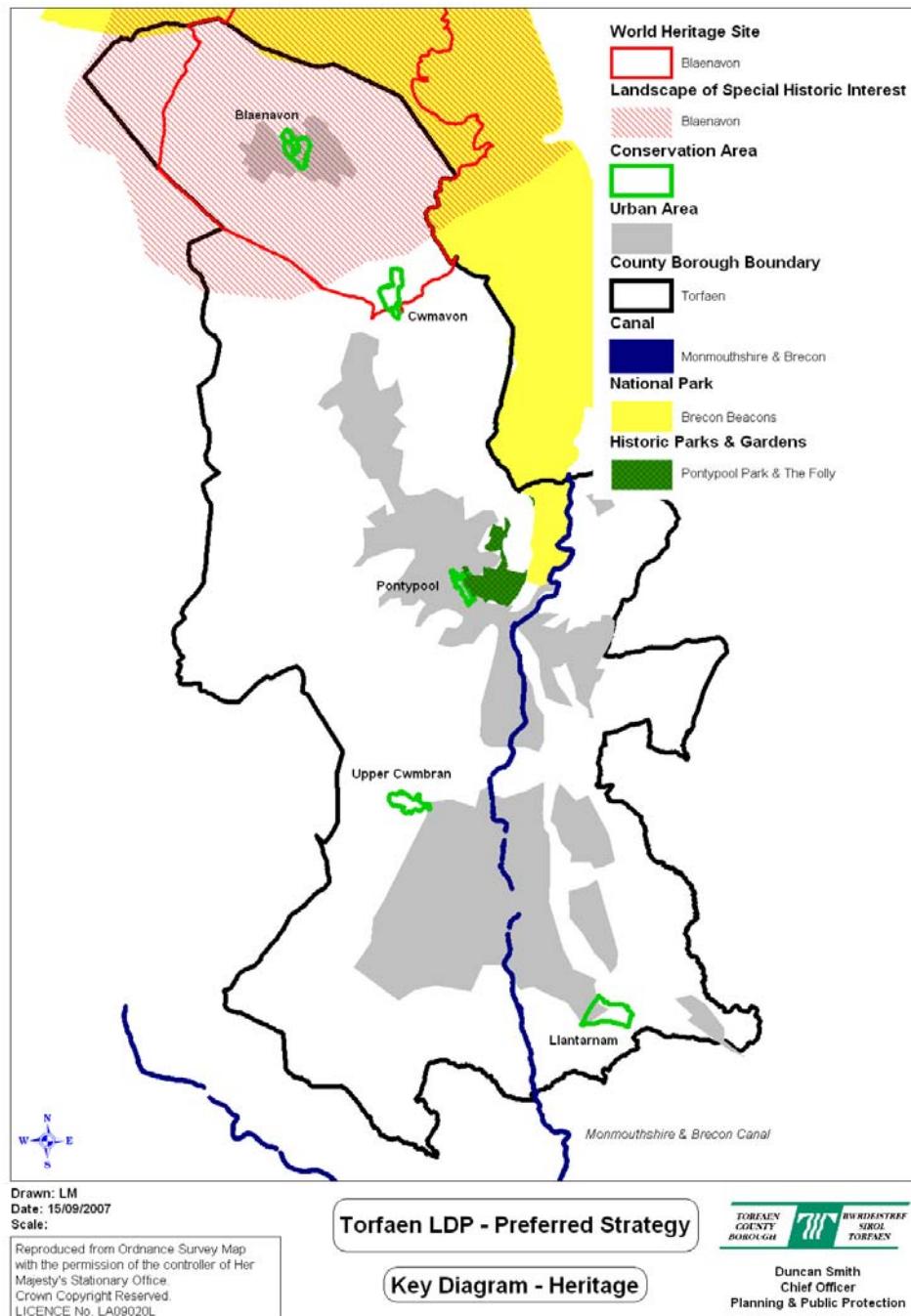


Figure 6 - Heritage

6.31 Minerals - In line with Assembly guidance, the LDP may have to safeguard potential aggregates, including high PSV sandstone when the SWRAWP 'Regional Technical Statement on Aggregates' is produced later this year. Further investigation may be required to identify any sites that are economic and environmentally acceptable to safeguard. Therefore, the matter will be considered in the Deposit LDP. Similarly, draft Assembly guidance requires the LDP to safeguard shallow coal reserves. The Council has yet to complete its study on whether the potential reserves are economic or environmentally acceptable. Therefore, this matter will also be addressed in the Deposit LDP.

6.32 Waste - Assembly guidance requires the LDP to safeguard in-building strategic waste sites. The area required to be safeguarded and the site selection methodology will be set out in the 1st Review of the South East Wales Regional Waste Plan which will be finalised in early 2008. Therefore, strategic waste sites will be safeguarded in the Deposit LDP.

7. Torfaen Local Development Plan Strategic Policies

Following from the Preferred Strategy the following Strategic Policies have been developed.

SP1 Sustainable Development

Sites for development will be allocated within and adjacent to existing urban areas and meet the following:-

- a) Promote sustainable resource use and construction techniques;
- b) Regeneration of existing communities;
- c) Transportation and infrastructure considerations, including reducing the reliance on the private motor car and use of more sustainable modes of transport;
- d) Protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment; and
- e) Maximise the efficient use of existing community infrastructure

SP2 Climate Change

All development proposals shall be designed to mitigate further climate change and adapt to the effects of climate change, including flood risk. This will be addressed through the following hierarchy:

- a) Ensuring that locational decisions are sustainable and promote sustainable transport choices;
- b) Sustainable design;
- c) Promoting energy efficiency and then;
- d) Promoting the use of renewable energy technologies

In order to reduce CO₂ emissions by a minimum of 10% above Building Regulations

SP3 Place-making / Good Design

Proposals for new development must have full regard to the context of the local natural and built environment and its special features through:

- a) Promotion of local distinctiveness through good design, material selection and layout;
- b) Incorporation of energy efficiency in layout and building technologies including sustainable construction practises and promotion of water conservation
- c) Location and layout that reflects sustainable transport and accessibility principles;
- d) Design in accordance with best practise in designing out crime

SP4 Housing

Provision will be made for the development of 7000 dwellings in Torfaen during the plan period 2006-2021; broken down to within the following Housing Market Areas: -

- a) North Torfaen (Blaenavon and Abersychan Wards) – **approximately 900 dwellings***;
- b) Pontypool – **approximately 2,800 dwellings*** and
- c) Cwmbran – **approximately 3,300 dwellings***.

* - (dwelling numbers subject to site availability and suitability)

SP5 Affordable Housing

The Authority will, based upon local needs, seek to negotiate the inclusion of an appropriate element of affordable housing, available in perpetuity, on suitable development sites.

SP6 Employment and Economy

The employment and economic development needs of Torfaen will be met by the identification of 60ha of land for employment and business purposes (use classes B1, B2 and B8) during the plan period 2006-2021. The employment role of important industrial and business areas will be enhanced and protected. A range and choice of accessible employment sites will be provided throughout Torfaen to provide opportunities for business and local employment needs to be provided, including provision to enhance town centre based employment and economic uses and increasing the tourism leisure and retail offer in our town centres.

SP7 Mineral Safeguarding

Any economic mineral resource which has been identified as being required to meet a national or South East Wales regional need will be safeguarded provided the impacts of extraction are potentially acceptable.

SP8 Waste Management

Sites for strategic waste management facilities will be identified based on regional and local need and the use of regional search criteria. The sites and type of facilities chosen will promote a hierarchical approach to sustainable waste management.

SP9 Environmental Protection Policy

Development proposals shall protect and enhance the following: -

- a) *Ecology and biodiversity assets beyond designated sites, including the integrity of the strategic ecological corridors of the Afon Lwyd, Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and the National Cycle Route 42;*
- b) *The water environment;*
- c) *Important network of public open space and recreation facilities;*
- d) *The integrity of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site;*
- e) *The character of the built environment. The valuable character of the built environment includes local distinctiveness and setting of settlements and townscape character;*
- f) *Identified Special Landscape Areas;*
- g) *Conservation and heritage assets; and*
- h) *Green Wedge areas between Cwmbran & Newport, Ponthir & Caerleon and Mamhilad & New Inn/Pontypool.*

SP10 Community Infrastructure

Contributions or appropriate provisions will be sought through Section 106 legal obligations to address the impacts of development on community infrastructure. They will be sought to secure the necessary infrastructure related to new development and may include:

- a) *Open space, play spaces and recreation facilities*

- b) Employment and commercial opportunities*
- c) Investment in educational provision*
- d) Highways and transport infrastructure improvements (including walking and cycling infrastructure)*
- e) Enhancement and management of environment and conservation interests*
- f) Waste management facilities and services*
- g) Public realm improvements and public art;*
- h) Renewable energy and energy efficiency*

SP11 Transport

Developments that promote a sustainable transport hierarchy by improved accessibility through public transport, walking and cycling provision, more efficient use of the existing highway network and where necessary new road build will be supported. In particular, access improvements to serve North Torfaen will be prioritised including the safeguarding of land at Pontypool / New Inn Railway Station for a new Park and Ride Facility.

SP12 Retailing / Town Centres

Major retail and main town centre leisure and culture developments will take place in, or as an extension to the Sub-Regional Shopping Centre of Cwmbran. The District Shopping Centres of Pontypool and Blaenavon will be protected and enhanced to improve vitality and viability and to ensure they meet the needs of local residents and to ensure that they have a range of facilities. Local Shopping Centres will be protected and enhanced to provide services and facilities for the local community.

SP13 Health and Education

Sites suitable for the potential relocation of Coleg Gwent, Pontypool and the development of a local general hospital to serve Torfaen will be safeguarded as well as potential sites for a new Specialist Critical Care Centre in Cwmbran

8. Land Supply to meet the Preferred Strategy

8.1 It is important that any proposed site considered suitable for development in the LDP is firstly developable, secondly in line with the overall objectives of the LDP and thirdly performs favourably in sustainability terms. In this respect Torfaen CBC proposes a 5 stage assessment of all candidate sites. It is considered that this will ensure a comprehensive evaluation to determine which sites have the potential to be considered further in order to inform the development of the LDP. The Draft Candidate Site Assessment Methodology accompanies the consultation on the Preferred Strategy. The **Candidate Site Assessment Methodology** identifies the evaluation process which will be used to determine which sites have the potential for further investigation to help the development of the LDP. An overview of the process is outlined below.

Stage 1: Assessment of the developability of the proposed site

8.2 The first stage of the assessment will focus on assessing the developability of the site, to identify both the potential for and constraints to development.

Stage 2: Assessment of the site against the Torfaen LDP Objectives

8.3 It is important that any site should be compatible with the objectives of the LDP and hence in accordance with the emerging Preferred Strategy of the LDP. Each site will be scored as to how it performs in achieving each of the 19 LDP objectives and how likely the sites preferred use will achieve each objective.

Stage 3: Assessment against the Torfaen LDP Sustainability Objectives

8.4 Further to the assessment against the LDP Objectives it will be important to analyse each site in sustainability terms and to assess how they perform against each of the Sustainability Objectives as part of the Torfaen LDP Sustainability Appraisal (inc. Strategic Environmental Assessment).

Stage 4 – Assessment against the LDP Preferred Strategy

8.5 All sites that satisfy the initial 3 stage assessment will then be subject to assessment to see if they are compatible with the LDP Preferred Strategy. The assessment will focus on whether the site has the potential to contribute to the strategic direction of the LDP including the level and distribution of growth set out in the Preferred Strategy.

Stage 5 – Finalisation of sites for Deposit LDP and submission of supporting information.

8.6 Any site contained in the list of provisional sites will be required to supply any further information/survey work requested by the Forward Planning Team. This will ensure that all sites included in the Deposit LDP will have been subject to a thorough assessment, with all necessary information available to support their inclusion in the Deposit Plan.

9. Implementation and Monitoring

Key Issues relating to the implementation of the strategy.

9.1 The deliverability of the strategy is a key aspect of the process. In particular the significant rise in housing completions means the strategy will have to facilitate a rapid rise in house building. In this regard there is a need to have a strategy which 'hits the ground running' with Development Sites. Therefore:

- Development Frameworks and Briefs being prepared early for sites
- Need for landowners to start working together on undertaking necessary impact studies are undertaken – ecology/transport impact assessments
- Risk assess all Strategic Sites

Performance Monitoring

9.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities with adopted LDPs to produce annual monitoring reports to ensure that the objectives of the Plan are being met. As part of this process, authorities are required to identify appropriate targets and indicators in their LDPs that can be taken forward for monitoring purposes. These indicators and targets are included within the SA/SEA scoping report.

10. Supplementary Planning Guidance Programme

The Supplementary Planning Guidance Programme is detailed below. This programme continues to be developed and it may therefore be extended or revised at the Deposit Plan Stage

Specific topic	Date
Section 106 agreements	April 2008
Affordable housing	April 2008
Recreation and open space	March 2009
Trees and landscaping on development sites	July 2010
Blaenavon World Heritage Site	July 2008
Sustainable development	July 2010
LANDMAP / Special Landscape Areas	March 2008
Design and crime	July 2010
Biodiversity and geodiversity	March 2009
Domestic buildings and extensions	July 2010
Rural issues	July 2010
Parking guidelines	July 2010
Transport design standards	July 2010
Shop front design, security and advertisements	July 2010
Pontypool conservation area	July 2010
Heritage conservation	July 2010
Development Briefs and Frameworks	
Development Briefs as required on all allocated non-strategic LDP sites, and various Local Plan sites	All by July 2010
Development Frameworks on all strategic LDP sites, and major Local Plan sites, including Cwmbran Town Centre Frameworks, The British and Llanfrechfa Grange	All by July 2010

11. List of Supporting Documents

- Torfaen LDP Delivery Agreement 2nd Version
- Report on the development of the Torfaen LDP Vision and Objectives
- Report on the Development of the Torfaen LDP Strategic Options
- Torfaen LDP Draft SA/SEA Scoping Report
- Candidates Sites Register
- Strategic Options Briefing Papers
- Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report
- Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report
- Candidate Sites Assessment Methodology
- Llanfrechfa Grange Development Framework