

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
PREFERRED STRATEGY

APRIL 2007

CYNLLUN DATBLYGU LLEOL
STRATEGAETH DDEWISEDIG

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1

The town and country planning system is designed to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. It seeks to reconcile the development needs of the population with the wider environmental concerns for the conservation of the man-made and natural environment. It also seeks to ensure that the most sustainable use is made of limited resources, whilst at the same time stimulating the local economy, for the benefit of present and future generations.

1.2

Within the planning system the Local Development Plan (LDP) sets the framework for the control of development proposals. When adopted, the LDP will supersede the existing Council Approved Unitary Development Plan (UDP), and all other structure and local plans prepared by

predecessor authorities for the Caerphilly County Borough area.

1.3

An important feature of the new LDP system is the emphasis on identifying and testing realistic options for meeting objectives of the Plan and testing each of the options through the process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The SEA/SA will provide criteria against which the policies and proposals of the LDP will be assessed. This will highlight areas where the plan is not contributing toward sustainable development and will identify where changes or mitigation measures can be included which will make the plan more sustainable. The assessment and amendment of the plan is an iterative process throughout the production of the LDP and, as such, the SEA/SA will continually inform the

content and nature of the LDP. The Preferred and Alternative Strategies have been subject to SEA/SA assessment and the Preferred Strategy has been modified in accordance with the findings of the assessment.

2. NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

National Policy Context - Delivering Sustainable Development

2.1

"Sustainable Development is not an option that will go away - it is the only way forward." *Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales*¹

2.2

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*.

2.3

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Local Planning Authority i.e. Caerphilly County Borough Council, 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.

2.4

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.

People, Places, Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan (November 2004)

2.5

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.

2.6

Caerphilly County Borough together with the neighbouring local authorities of Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Torfaen and Cardiff, lie within the South East Region of Wales, which has been identified by the WSP as 'The Capital Network'.

2.7

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'*

The 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".

¹ *Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004-2007, Welsh Assembly Government, November 2004*

2.8

Caerphilly County Borough has an increasingly strategic location at the centre of the Capital Network Region. Located between the M4 corridor, the Capital City of Cardiff and the City of Newport in the south and the A465 and the Heads of the Valleys in the north, Caerphilly is in an excellent position to enjoy the opportunities that are afforded as the Capital Network becomes more integrated and more successful. In turn, this future vision of Caerphilly Borough will contribute to the realisation of the Capital Network concept with the WSP.

Regional Policy Context

Turning Heads... A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020 (June 2006)

2.9

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

2.10

The Heads of the Valleys strategy area includes the Upper Rhymney Valley and the Upper Sirhowy Valley areas encompassing the settlements of Prinetown, Rhymney, Abertysswg, Pontlottyn, Fochriw, Deri, New Tred-

egar, Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Gilfach, Argoed, Markham, and Hollybush. It is important to ensure that the development strategy for the LDP harnesses and exploits the opportunities afforded to the north of the County Borough by the Heads of the Valleys Strategy.

2.11

In particular, the Heads of the Valleys programme has funded studies into the **Valleys Regional Park** concept. The Valleys Regional Park idea is to co-ordinate, develop and market the countryside recreation assets of the South Wales Valleys - the vast areas of common land and country parks, the extensive network of cycle and footpaths and the industrial and earlier heritage features - in order to create a more positive image for the former coal mining areas and provide a unique recreational asset for residents and visitors alike. The initial scoping study has indicated that the whole of Caerphilly County Borough

should be included in the Regional Park area.

Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 01/2006 - Housing (June 2006)

South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG)

2.12

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.

2.13

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...."

2.14

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 2023.

2.15

In line with WAG policy, Caerphilly 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.

2.16

It is important to note that based on existing Census information the long-standing trend of out-migration from Caerphilly appears to have been halted. It is therefore possible to assume that a position of migration balance could be maintained throughout the plan period. This would require a house-building rate of 500 dwellings per annum, leading to a population for Caerphilly County Borough of 174,000 by 2021.

2.17

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, cur-

rent land availability, environmental capacity.

2.18

The provisional apportionment exercise that has been undertaken by SEWSPG suggests the county borough to allocate land to accommodate 9,500 dwellings over the plan period (a house building rate of 650 dwellings per annum) leading to a high rate of growth in the population to 180,000 by 2021. In the Council's view this rate of housing growth is significant given existing long-standing population trends. In order for Caerphilly to meet its regional responsibilities the apportionment figure is accepted as a basis for determining the maximum land allocation for housing in the County Borough.

Regional Transport Plan

2.19

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.

2.20

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. It is anticipated that the RTP will be complete by 2008.

2.21

As an integral part of the preparation of the RTP the Council will review the Transport Strategy contained in the Caerphilly County Borough Local Transport Plan (August 2000). 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 the Area WSP, the RTP and the Preferred Strategy

2.22

The preparation of the RTP is closely linked to the emerging WSP South East Wales Development Framework which is also reflected by a concept

of the Preferred Strategy termed the Areas of Change. The key settlements identified by the Development Framework are mirrored by the selection of Principal Centres in the Preferred Strategy. These matters are explained in more detail in Chapter 7 of this document.

South East Wales Regional Waste Plan (March 2004)

2.23

The Regional Waste Plan (RWP) 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.

2.24

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, including Caerphilly County Borough Council.

2.25

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 com-

plete. A draft of the revised document is expected to be made available for comment in the Summer of 2007.

2.26

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. **Appendices Section 1** provides the latest estimated requirements for in-building facilities site provision in Caerphilly County Borough. The Council will seek to identify suitable locations for new facilities throughout the County Borough having regard for both this and the forthcoming guidance.

South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party - Regional Technical Statement

2.27

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.

2.28

Within the County Borough there are resources of coal, sand/gravel, and other 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. It is scheduled for publication in Summer 2007.

2.29

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. An area of land at Nant Llesg, Rhymney has been identified by the Coal Authority for further consideration (**refer to Appendices Section 3**). The Council has concluded that this site should not be safeguarded within the LDP because of detrimental impact on the emerging Tourism Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys area.

2.30

South Wales is uniquely dependant on marine dredged sand and gravel.

About 95% of the fine aggregate used in construction comes from sandbanks in the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel. For some time now there has been concern about the possible effects of dredging on the South Wales Coastline and beaches. The Welsh Assembly Government has addressed this via the Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy 2004 and also in Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 Aggregates 2004.

2.31

The Aggregates TAN requires local planning authorities to safeguard resources of land-based sand and gravel in their Local Development Plans for potential use by future generations. Research has been carried out (Symonds Group Ltd 2000) to determine the potential of sand and gravel resources in South Wales and a map has been published showing the distribution of potential resource blocks. In Caerphilly there are res-

ources of sand and gravel in Nelson, Llanbradach, and around Draethen and Cefn Mably, both of these being hamlets south of Machen (**refer to Appendices Section 3**). All of these resources are relatively small and fragmented, the Council is presently examining which areas in the County Borough, if any, should be safeguarded.

3 LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

3.1

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.

Community Strategy: Community Planning in Action (November 2004)

3.2

Under the Local Government Act 2000 the Council has a duty to prepare a community strategy for the County Borough. The Community Strategy sets out the overarching strategic framework for all other plans and strategies for the County Borough. The LDP should express, in

appropriate land use terms those elements of the community strategy that relate to the development and use of land.

3.3

'Community Planning in Action' sets out how the Council in partnership with other agencies and local communities will make the county borough a place where people:

- like to live and want to stay and make a home - the Living Environment Theme;
- can find opportunities for (paid and unpaid) work that is rewarding - the Regeneration Theme;
- can develop a range of interests, knowledge and activities - the Education for Life Theme; and
- can lead a full, healthy life and get treatment, support and care as and when required - the Health, Social Care and Well-being Theme.

3.4

The Community Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough has the following overarching principles:

- To develop and maintain partnership-based planning and delivery of services to achieve sustainable social, economic and environmental well-being.
- To promote a culture where there are opportunities for all regardless of colour, ethnic origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, religion, language or nationality.

3.5

The four themes have Strategic Partnerships in place to deliver the visions and meet the objectives outlined in the Community Strategy. The LDP will facilitate the delivery of the land use elements of the *Living Environment Strategy* and *The Smart Alternative*

(the Regeneration Strategy) in particular.

3.6

A vitally important part of the community strategy is the spatial dimension and the land use implications of policies contained within it. The development strategy contained in the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was used as the basis for establishing the five Area Steering Groups that serve to implement the policies within the Community Strategy, as follows: Upper Rhymney Valley; Upper Sirhowy Valley; Mid Valleys East; Mid Valleys West and the Caerphilly Basin. As an integral part of the Local Development Plan process the Council has assessed the development strategy contained in the UDP and examined alternative strategy options to determine how the development of the County Borough should be guided up to 2021.

Living Environment Partnership Strategy

3.7

The Living Environment Partnership has developed a Strategy for improving the Living Environment in the County Borough over a five year period 2007-2012. It is based on extensive research and an 'evidence base' of environmental statistics, information and consultation.

3.8

The Living Environment Strategy sets out how the Living Environment Partnership, along with local people, can help to address the environmental aspects of the Community Strategy and improve local quality of life. The seven key objectives are as follows:

A Encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient, sustainable homes and residential environments that can meet all needs

B Promote a culture of community self help, cohesion and citizenship and involvement in decision making

C Improve community safety and quality of life by reducing crime, nuisance behaviour and the fear of crime

D Increase awareness and opportunities for safe access to the countryside and open spaces

E Ensure the protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of the natural environment, including the quality of air, rivers and watercourses, flood prevention, landscape and biodiversity, and our historic environment

F Encourage the improvement of town and village centres as a focus for community pride, with accessible services and activities for all

G Improve energy, waste and water efficiency and promote

environmentally acceptable renewable energy to maintain a cleaner environment and help reduce our impact on climate change

The Development Strategy for the LDP has had regard for these objectives.

The Smart Alternative

3.9

The Smart Alternative is the Regeneration Programme for Caerphilly County Borough and the Regeneration Partnership for the period up to 2013. Its purpose is to demonstrate how regeneration proposals link to national objectives and to encourage funding. There are six regeneration objectives identified in the report as follows:

Principle 1 - Capitalise on the Proximity to Cardiff and Newport

Principle 2 - Strengthening the Economy of the Mid Valleys Corridor

Principle 3 - Build a Lifelong Learning Culture

Principle 4 - Diversify and Strengthen the Economy

Principle 5 - Re-establish town centres as foci of economic activity

Principle 6 - Community Led Regeneration through the County Borough

The Development Strategy for the LDP has had regard for these objectives.

Health Social Care and Well Being Partnership Strategy

3.10

The Health Social Care & Well Being (HSCWB) Partnership is involved in implementing the 2005-2008 strategy and devising the 2008-2011 strategy that will replace it in April 2008. The strategies set out an exciting and ambitious vision for Health Social Care and Well Being within the County Borough to which partners are fully committed.

3.11

The starting point has been a firm assessment of need through a whole population needs assessment. The 2005-2008 strategy seeks to balance local needs with national directives. It spans all age groups and is closely aligned with a number of other strategies to ensure the delivery of the Caerphilly County Borough Community Strategy. The current strategy has the following five themes:

- To improve public health by promoting factors that contribute to healthy lifestyles and well being
- To reduce health inequalities by tackling deprivation and the wider determinants of health
- To expand and develop community based health and social care services
- To enable independent living in local communities through appropriate support mechanisms for individuals, families and carers

- To develop and strengthen preventative work and service provision for vulnerable children and adults

The Development Strategy for the LDP has had regard for these objectives.

Education for Life Partnership Strategy

3.12

The key objectives in the school sector are:

- To review surplus secondary school places
- To continue to implement a programme to raise standards of literacy
- To increase the number of schools participating in the Healthy Schools Initiative
- To improve school attendance

3.13

The key objectives in post-16 education and training are:

- To increase the provision of basic skills training
- To support the 14-19 Local Area Network to enhance vocational and skills based options including provision through the medium of Welsh
- To address demand for skills in the Built Environment
- To provide appropriate training courses to support the economically inactive to take up employment opportunities
- To increase the number of training places for workers in the early years and childcare sector
- To support customer care courses in selected sectors
- To continue the development of the RISE Learning Network with increased emphasis on workforce development including basic skills

The Development Strategy for the LDP has had regard for these objectives.

Caerphilly Employment Sites Supply and Market Appraisal (2006)

3.14

In 2005, the Council in partnership with the former Welsh Development Agency (WDA) commissioned Atkins Planning Consultancy to undertake a comprehensive review of employment land and premises within the County Borough. One of the key aims of the Study was the need to assess future needs in order to inform the preparation of the Local Development Plan. The former WDA is now known as the Department of Enterprise, Innovation & Networks (DEIN).

3.15

The Study has regard to a number of national and regional policy documents including the WDA Property Strategy,² the Five Counties Regen-

eration Framework³ and information from the South East Wales Economic Forum. The DEIN Property Strategy is currently under review.

3.16

The Methodology of the Study was based on guidance from the ODPM on Employment Land Reviews⁴. Whilst this advice is specifically targeted towards English local authorities and the preparation of Local Development Frameworks, it serves as best practice advice in the absence of any Wales-specific guidance. The methodology used in the study is considered to be sufficiently robust to form part of the evidence base for the LDP, and much of the information collected and employment calculations produced as part of the study, (outlined in the LDP Employment Topic Paper) have been used as a basis for informing the level of employment land to be provided for across the County Borough.

Caerphilly Local Housing Market Assessment

3.17

The Council is required to prepare a Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) as an important part of the evidence base for the preparation of the LDP and the Housing Strategy. The LHMA will enable the Council to develop a thorough understanding of the nature and level of housing need in the County Borough and will inform the development of robust planning policies in relation to affordable housing, special needs housing and the housing provision for Gypsies and Travellers.

3.18

The Council have commissioned consultants to undertake this work. On completion the results of the assessment will be used to inform the implementation of the Strategy through the detailed policies for the Deposit LDP.

Local Infrastructure

3.19

In planning for the provision of new development within the County Borough over the plan period, the Council will work closely with the public utility companies in order to ensure that the existing and proposed infrastructure has sufficient capacity to support planned development.

² WDA (2004) WDA Property Strategy for employment in Wales 2004-2008, WDA, Cardiff

³ Shared Intelligence (2002) Five counties regeneration Framework, Shared Intelligence, South Wales

⁴ ODPM (2004) Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Notes, ODPM, London

4 KEY ISSUES FOR CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

4.1

In order to ensure a robust basis for the development strategy for the plan, a review has been undertaken of the social, economic and environmental data available for issues effecting Caerphilly County Borough. A detailed discussion on the broad issues that are relevant to the LDP is contained in the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal: Draft Scoping Report (October 2006)'. These issues are also pertinent to the formulation of alternative strategies for the Local Development Plan.

4.2

Additional issues identified by key stakeholders in a series of pre-deposit public participation exercises carried out by the Council throughout 2006 are contained in the following documents:

- Report of Findings: Visioning Workshops (June 2006); and
- Report of Findings: Development of Alternative Strategic Options (September 2006).

4.3

A summary of the land use issues identified is attached at **Appendices Section 2**.

5 A VISION FOR CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

5.1

In considering how the LDP should guide and manage future development in the County Borough, it is important that a clear Vision of what the County Borough should look like in fifteen years time is formulated. This has already been achieved with partners through the development of the Community Strategy.

5.2

The Vision Statement for the LDP outlined below has been derived from the Community Strategy through a series of workshop sessions with key stakeholders as an integral part of the pre-deposit public participation exercise. There were key policy issues that reoccurred throughout each of the workshop sessions and these, shape and inform the Vision Statement for the LDP. Taken together they express the need to promote:

- Sustainability - protecting the environment as a whole whilst balancing the need for development with the need to conserve valuable resources
- Good Design - underpinning all development with good design that meets a diversity of needs; which uses resources efficiently; and which makes adequate provision for recycling and waste management
- A Clean, Green and Safe Environment - making Caerphilly Borough a pleasant place to live and work with decent public services
- Health and Social Cohesion - enhancing the vibrancy and diversity of communities
- Equal opportunities for all to proposed and existing facilities and services within and outside the County Borough
- Green transport policies - including the provision of an integrated public transport system in close proximity to new and existing development
- Provision of land to provide for employment opportunities, supported by appropriate housing and ancillary facilities and services (Including community facilities, recreation, leisure etc) - promoting a mix of uses where appropriate
- Regeneration - Using resources efficiently and making the best use of our assets
- Improved education facilities to 'up skill' the population
- Caerphilly County Borough as an area in its own right

DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

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.

5.3

In agreeing the Vision Statement last year the Council resolved: "to agree to review the Vision Statement as an integral part of the development plan process as and when necessary"

5.4

As a part of the work that has been undertaken in respect of the Strategic Options it has become apparent that there is a need to review the vision statement to make

it more distinctive in terms of Caerphilly County Borough and to refine it to more closely align with the Preferred Strategy. The Vision Statement is therefore revised as follows:

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN VISION STATEMENT

The Development Strategy for the Local Development Plan will capitalise on the strategic location of Caerphilly County Borough at the centre of the Capital Network Region. It will ensure that the needs of all the County Borough's residents and visitors are met and that the regeneration of our towns, villages and employment centres and the surrounding countryside is delivered in a well-balanced and sustainable manner that reflects the specific role and function of individual settlements.

5.5

In order to achieve the vision, the LDP will outline a series of key objectives

for each of the four themes of the Community Strategy, namely:

- Health Social Care and Well Being
- The Living Environment
- Regeneration and
- Education for Life.

5.6

The objectives contained in the Council's Community Strategy document have been examined and those with a land use implication extracted. These selected objectives are contained in **Appendices Section 4**. They will contribute towards future policy development and will be critical in terms of the future monitoring of the success or otherwise of the Plan.

6 DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS INCLUDING THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

6.1

An important new feature of the Local Development Plan system is the emphasis on identifying and testing realistic strategy options for meeting the Vision and the stated objectives of the plan. It is important to recognise that the LDP sits within a complex National and Local policy framework and as such in order to be achievable each of the options need to be capable of delivery within this complex policy framework.

6.2

It should also be recognised that the pressures for development, availability of suitable sites, the willingness of the private sector to invest, the sensitivity of the environment and the basic transport and service infrastructure vary widely across the County Borough. It is

therefore necessary to consider these factors when determining the options to guide development over the plan period.

6.3

In order to arrive at a preferred strategy the Council in consultation with partner organisations and key stakeholders identified and refined a number of strategy options through the pre-deposit participation process. These three Alternative Strategies named below are fully discussed in **Appendices Section 5**:

OPTION A

CONTINUATION OF UDP
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(Continuation of Existing Trends)

OPTION B

URBAN CONTAINMENT STRATEGY

OPTION C

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH STRATEGY

LDP PREFERRED STRATEGY

6.4

The Preferred Strategy represents a combination of the best elements of the three Alternative Strategies discussed in **Appendices Section 5**. As a result of stakeholder consultations on the Alternative Strategies, eight 'components' or themes for the preferred strategy were identified. These were:

- Allow for development opportunities in the North
- Promote a balanced approach to managing future growth
- Exploit brownfield opportunities where appropriate
- Promote resource efficient settlement patterns
- Ensure development contributes towards the necessary infrastructure improvements

- Ensure development provides the necessary community facilities
- Reduce the impact of development upon the countryside
- Target development to reflect the roles and functions of individual settlements

6.5

The Preferred Strategy combines the above strands with the regional context provided by the Wales Spatial Plan and other regional strategies and programmes. The Preferred Strategy is a spatial development proposal designating areas of change and of protection, which together are intended to deliver the aims of the Vision Statement.

Urban Structure - the roles of towns and villages in Caerphilly County Borough

6.6

An integral part of this strategy is an emphasis on the development of sustainable and appropriate roles for each settlement that will provide the context for managing the scale and type of development that will be permitted in different locations.

6.7

Within the County Borough there are very few settlements that are capable of being self sufficient in terms of comprising an adequate range and mix of land uses. As a consequence most settlements enjoy a close relationship with a cluster of other villages and towns in order to provide the range of services that are needed to sustain them.

6.8

In order to understand this relationship a functional analysis of the

County Borough based on the five Community Plan Areas has been undertaken as an integral part of the plan preparation process (refer to **Appendices Section 6**). These areas are:

1. Upper Rhymney Valley - including Bargoed and Upper Sirhowy Valley
2. Mid Valleys West
3. Mid Valleys East
4. Lower Islwyn, and
5. Caerphilly Basin.

6.9

Whilst this analysis has informed all Strategy Options it is particularly pertinent to the Preferred Strategy, with the role and function of each settlement being a significant consideration in the identification of sites for new development.

6.10

The roles and functions of the numerous settlements need to be consid-

ered in terms of both their location within the County Borough and within the wider region. Emerging strategies at the South East Wales level divide the county borough into two broad spatial zones as follows:

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area - Upper Rhymney Valley and Upper Sirhowy Valley.

Connections Corridor - remainder of the county borough.

The LDP Strategy will further distinguish between the **Northern** Connections Corridor (Mid Valleys East and Mid Valleys West) and the **Southern** Connections Corridor (Caerphilly Basin and Lower Islwyn) where the influence of Cardiff and Newport is much more marked. See figure 1 - Key Diagram on the next page.

6.11

Within each strategy area there is a cluster of settlements that are centered on a principal town or conur-

bation, which acts as the hub for activity. A number of Key Settlements and a cluster of primarily residential areas support each of the Principal Towns. Where possible non-residential development opportunities will be focused on the Principal Towns and Key Settlements in the first instance in order to ensure their continued viability as centres for economic and social activity.

6.12

Principal Towns are strategically important. They are capable of supporting countywide services and facilities that are required to meet the wide and diverse social, economic and community needs of the resident and working population of the town itself, surrounding Key Settlements and residential areas. Vibrant, accessible and safe Principal Towns are essential to the economic prosperity of the County Borough and the overall quality of life for resi-

dents. The emphasis in these areas will be on developing them as a focus for economic activity whilst ensuring that their vitality and viability is strengthened, in order to attract and maintain a full range of services and facilities.

6.13

For the purpose of the LDP the **Principal Towns** in the County Borough are: **Blackwood, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach** - together forming the mid valleys conurbation - and **Caerphilly and Risca-Pontymister**. These relate to the key settlements of the emerging WSP South East Wales Development Framework.

6.14

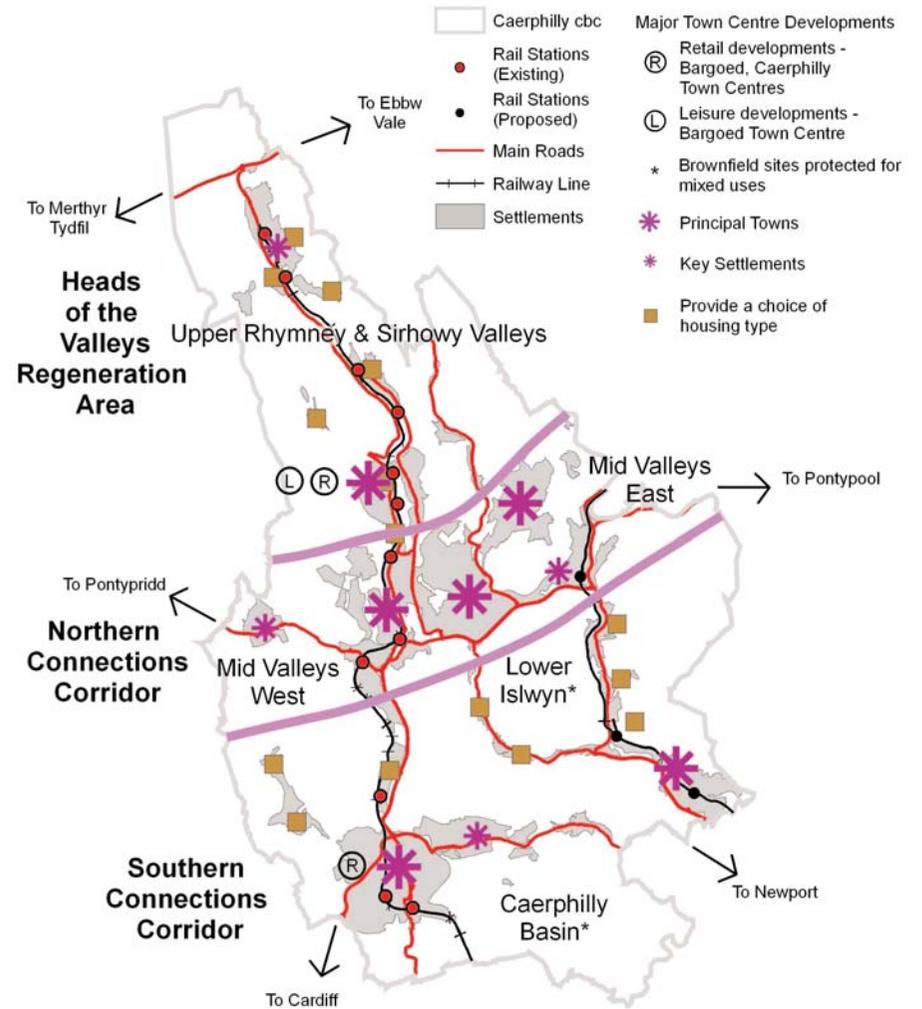
Around the periphery of the County Borough are a number of Key Settlements. These towns have a wider role than serving purely local needs and/or provide a limited range of urban services for areas that are mid way between the principal

centres in Caerphilly county borough and the principal towns in adjacent local authority areas. **The Key Settlements** in the County Borough are: **Bedwas, Nelson, Newbridge, and Rhymney**.

6.15

All other towns and villages are referred to as primarily residential areas although it is important to note that these areas will also contain other complementary local facilities such as schools and local shops within them and often some local employment as well, so that they should not be seen as 'just' housing areas. The emphasis within residential areas will be on: retaining their distinct identity; providing a choice of house types; and maintaining and creating attractive sustainable communities where people will want to live.

Figure 1: Key Diagram illustrating the Areas of Change



Whilst the Key Diagram illustrates the main component zones of the Preferred Strategy, the areas of allocation and protection require further assessment in terms of particular topics before being fully documented. Surveys are still on-going and the Deposit Plan will contain full guidance in this respect.

6.16

Appendices Section 7 provides an overview of the facilities that are available in each of County Borough's settlements.

COMPONENTS OF THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

Allow for development opportunities in the North

6.17

In the past it has proved difficult to attract private investment into the northern part of the County Borough, but recently there are indications that this is changing. The Welsh Assembly Government has prioritised this part of the County Borough for regeneration by including it in the Heads of the Valleys Programme area which complements the Council's own priorities for regeneration.

6.18

Therefore the preferred strategy of this plan seeks to exploit development opportunities in this area, with

a view to creating a viable future for all of the communities in this part of the County Borough. Significant new urban facilities are planned for Bargoed and Rhymney and it is planned that the area will make a major contribution to the Valleys Regional Park.

6.19

The Preferred Strategy will seek to accommodate new housing in villages where there is a need to diversify the housing stock in order to retain the existing population and regenerate deprived communities in the North.

Promote a balanced approach to managing future growth

6.20

The Southern Connections Corridor, and in particular, Caerphilly Town, is currently the County Borough's most attractive area to potential investors, but a strategy which relies solely on the south of the County Borough for

economic progress is unsustainable in the long term.

6.21

The Preferred Strategy therefore promotes a more balanced approach to managing future growth, in which development opportunities in the Southern Connections Corridor and Caerphilly Town in particular are limited to brownfield sites. More significant development opportunities on both brownfield and greenfield sites are therefore proposed for principal towns and key settlements in the Northern Connections Corridor and the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area in order to spread prosperity throughout the County Borough.

6.22

The strategy also recognises the existence of a major urban conurbation in the Northern Connections Corridor and southern Heads of the Valleys area, which because of its central location, could provide the main

driver for the regeneration of the county borough as a whole. The conurbation contains a number of complementary 'urban hubs', namely Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood, Oakdale, Bargoed and Newbridge. Blackwood is the principal retail centre, Ystrad Mynach has administrative, health and further education roles while leisure facilities such as a multiplex cinema are proposed for Bargoed and a new rail service will be introduced in Newbridge. Together with the major employment site at Oakdale/Penyfan, these 'hubs' of activity form a powerful driver for economic growth and quality of life facilities in the County Borough.

6.23

Opportunities for residential development will be distributed across the whole County Borough but they will be targeted at settlements with good rail or bus services and also mining villages that require additional hous-

ing in order to promote and sustain them as viable residential areas (see Key Diagram). Where appropriate improvements to public transport provision and services will be sought as part of such development.

6.24

The need for affordable housing within strategy areas will be identified and appropriate policies pursued to ensure that the housing needs of all sectors of the community are met.

Exploit brownfield opportunities where appropriate

6.25

The County Borough has significant areas of brownfield land available for redevelopment across the whole area. The most notable sites being Bargoed Plateau, Aberbargoed (11ha) in the Heads of the Valley Regeneration Area; Oakdale Colliery (67.6 ha) and Penallta Colliery, Ystrad Mynach (28 ha) in the Northern Connections Corridor; and Bedwas

Colliery, Bedwas (23 ha), Ness Tar (12 ha), land at Pontypandy, Caerphilly (10 ha) and Risca Foundry (3.3ha) in the Southern Connections Corridor.

6.26

It is important to note that the Southern Connections Corridor is well provided for in terms of brownfield sites and the plan will need to balance the need to redevelop these sites against the need to ensure that growth is managed across the whole of the County Borough to regenerate the more deprived parts of the County Borough. Therefore where brownfield sites exist and their development would not have an adverse effect on the role and function of the County Borough as a whole they will be allocated for appropriate forms of development. However, the plan will resist the development of brownfield sites for housing within the Southern Connections Corridor where their development will undermine the role

and function of principal towns or key settlements where there is a need to reserve land for employment or urban facilities.

6.27

The diversification of the economy, and the ongoing restructuring of public services offers the opportunity to utilise other brownfield sites such as former hospital sites, office sites, industrial and other sites that are no longer required to accommodate their existing use, for alternative land uses. The Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area and the Upper Rhymney Valley in particular have a significant amount of employment land (approximately 34 ha) that has the potential to accommodate alternative land uses, whilst retaining an employment function. The location of many of these sites is largely predetermined by the industrial and cultural heritage of the area.

Promote resource efficient settlement patterns

6.28

A key part of the Preferred Strategy is to promote resource efficient patterns of development across the whole of the County Borough. The strategy will actively promote a positive approach to energy efficiency and conservation measures in both the siting and design of new developments.

6.29

A key mechanism for achieving resource efficient settlements and to indicate where growth will be permitted is the designation of settlement boundaries. The settlement boundary performs a number of important strategic functions, namely: it defines the area within which development would normally be allowed, taking into account all other material considerations; it promotes the full and effective use of urban land and thus concentrates development within

settlements; it prevents the coalescence of settlements where appropriate, ribbon development and fragmented development; it prevents inappropriate development in the countryside and it acts as a tool to guide development control decisions thus providing certainty to the public and developers.

6.30

The delineation of settlement boundaries across the County Borough will be determined by the functional analysis of the strategy areas, namely the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area, the Northern Connections Corridor, the Southern Connections Corridor and by the specific role and function of individual settlements. A different approach to settlement boundary delineation will be required in each of the three strategy areas in order to manage growth across the County Borough as a whole.

6.31

Existing land allocations and other areas of open land within existing settlement boundaries will be rigorously reassessed with a view to reallocating land where appropriate for alternative land uses. Care will be taken to ensure that vulnerable land uses such as open space, leisure land and community uses have sufficient protection, to avoid their loss to more profitable development such as housing and to avoid the potential for town and village cramming. Where land is identified as being surplus to requirement and its development would result in the efficient use of land within settlement limits it will be released for alternative forms of development.

6.32

Given the topography of the area and the way in which rapid urbanisation took place in the nineteenth century, a significant amount of urban development in the County

Borough has taken place alongside rivers, within the river corridor and often on the flood plain. It is therefore inevitable, despite the overall aim to avoid flood risk areas, that some existing development will be vulnerable to flooding. Some flexibility is necessary to enable the risks of flooding to be addressed whilst recognising the negative economic and social consequences of precluding investment in existing urban areas, and the benefits of reusing previously developed land. In assessing the suitability of previously developed land for new development a judgement will need to be made in terms of the social and economic benefits of redeveloping the site and the likely environmental impact of redevelopment including effects on wildlife and biodiversity. Difficult choices will need to be made with regard to floodplain development in view of increasing risks due to climate change. Where development can be justified suit-

able mitigation measures will need to be incorporated within the design of any new development to ensure that it is as safe as possible. Wherever possible in such locations redevelopment will also be planned in such a way as to provide increased protection for existing vulnerable urban areas.

6.33

To change the land-use transportation system significantly will take many years. In the meantime the road network will play a critical role in improving accessibility to employment opportunities, to shopping centres and to community and other facilities. The policies in the LDP must continue to provide an efficient transport system for the existing settlement pattern whilst moving towards a more sustainable, resource efficient settlement pattern across the whole County Borough. The strategy will build on the significant improvements to the strategic road network over

the last decade and will promote further improvements to ensure that the network as a whole functions in an efficient manner.

6.34

In the longer term a significant switch from car to rail is planned and therefore settlements with good access to existing and planned rail services will be favoured, particularly for high-density development. Rail corridors are seen as the most appropriate locations for future development that are likely to generate large numbers of journeys. The proximity of key transport nodes will be a significant consideration in the identification of sites for new development.

6.35

The plan will also identify opportunities where higher density development schemes will be particularly appropriate due to the proximity of the site to the transportation network and in particular public transport. A

balance will need to be struck between safeguarding key sites close to transportation nodes for facilities such as park and ride and redeveloping them to accommodate public transport friendly development opportunities.

6.36

The Strategy will support the development of an integrated and adequate network of modern, well designed and well managed hierarchy of waste management/resource recovery facilities across the County Borough to serve the needs of the population.

Development to contribute towards necessary infrastructure improvements

6.37

An unfortunate by-product of the success of the development strategy contained in the Unitary Development Plan has been a significant increase in congestion within the

Connections Corridor, in particular at critical parts of the strategic network, such as along the A472 road corridor. This is not considered to be sustainable as new development will add to the problems of congestion if it is not accompanied by appropriate investment in the infrastructure. Developers will therefore be required to contribute (through Planning Obligations or directly) towards improvements to the strategic road network and other necessary infrastructure improvements, including improvements to the public transport system as an integral part of the Preferred Strategy. To this end the current planning obligation that applies to the Caerphilly Basin will be extended to all parts of the County Borough except the Heads of the Valley Regeneration Area, where such a policy would be counter-productive in terms of deterring potential inward investment. However, in this process there will need to

be a balance drawn with the Public Health issues in terms of compliance with air quality standards, road safety through design, safe footpaths, and public safety within the design context.

Development to provide necessary community facilities

6.38

Although the Council plays a major part in the provision of well designed open space and appropriate play facilities, there is a need for developers to include such provision as an integral part of any development proposal. The inclusion of formal and informal open spaces within new development is important for a number of reasons, namely: it provides for the recreational needs of local residents and there are significant health benefits by increasing exercise opportunities that enable greater physical activity; it enhances the quality of life of residents and contributes to their sense of well being; it

can positively contribute to the built environment; and it can contribute to biodiversity, the conservation of nature and landscape, air quality and the protection of groundwater. Developers will therefore be required to make appropriate contributions (through Planning Obligations or Conditions) to ensure that sufficient levels of well designed open space and appropriate play facilities are provided to serve all new developments throughout the County Borough.

6.39

In addition where justified, the Council will ask for contributions towards other community facilities such as schools, where the proposed development is likely to exceed the capacity of existing provision.

Reduce the impact of development on the countryside

6.40

In some parts of the County Borough any further growth outside settlement

boundaries would result in the development of particularly sensitive areas such as Special Landscape Areas (SLA) or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, this is particularly the case in the Southern Connections Corridor. In such areas the ability of the environment to accommodate development without undue harm is very limited, particularly where further constrained by topography.

6.41

The distribution of the designation of such valued and sensitive areas gives a broad indication of environmental capacity in different parts of the County Borough in relation to the limits of existing settlements. Where settlements are identified for growth, care will be taken to ensure that the environment has the capacity to accommodate it whilst having regard for the need to protect and or conserve those aspects of the natural environment that are valued for

their landscape, biodiversity or agricultural interest. Where greenfield sites are identified, consideration will be given to the potential for the development of the sites to realise landscape enhancement and biodiversity gain as a result of their development. This will include the need to consider the creation and maintenance of green corridors for the movement of all species, particularly in relation to climate change impacts. This may involve taking a step beyond that of the existing ecological conservation designations and considering the biodiversity of the County Borough and the surrounding sub region as a whole.

6.42

Energy conservation makes a positive contribution to the protection of the environment through a reduction in the release of harmful emissions into the atmosphere. In addition, renewable energy technology such as solar water heating, heat pumps,

even district heating schemes have an important role to play in the built environment. However there are a number of renewable energy sources that have the potential to have an adverse impact on valued aspects of the countryside, for example the potential impact of wind generated energy on the landscape. The strategy will therefore balance the need for the development of renewable energy schemes against the potential impact of such development on the landscape and on sites of ecological interest.

6.43

In general, however, the Council sees the countryside, which makes up nearly 75% of the land area of the County Borough, as a positive asset that can strengthen regeneration strategies and provide an enhanced quality of life for all. In particular the plan will seek to develop opportunities for the County Borough to contribute to the Valleys Regional Park -

a network of countryside recreation areas linked by strategic footpaths and cycleways.

6.44

It should be noted that both SLAs and SINC are subject of review as an integral part of the LDP process and that the environmental capacity is based on existing evidence as at 2006.

Development targeted to reflect the role and function of individual settlements

6.45

The role and function of individual settlements is a key factor in determining how the strategy responds to their individual needs. Whilst the LDP is required to identify sites for new development it does not mean that all uses are acceptable in all settlements. The appropriateness of uses will be considered against the role and function of each settlement, with only appropriate uses being

allocated. In doing this it is proposed to ensure equality of opportunity throughout the County Borough.

Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area-Upper Rhymney and Upper Sirhowy Valleys

6.46

Bargoed is the principal town in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area. As the main town, Bargoed provides a range of functions and services for the surrounding settlements that are not available elsewhere in the Caerphilly Heads of the Valleys area. The importance of the Town is recognised by the Heads of the Valleys programme and as such the Welsh Assembly Government designates it as a regeneration priority area. It is anticipated that the development of the 'Angel Way' will serve to improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the town and will act, as a catalyst to attract much needed public and private investment into Bargoed Town Centre.

6.47

The emphasis in Bargoed will be on restructuring and redeveloping the existing town centre to ensure that it is a viable retailing, leisure and employment centre and that it is fit for purpose in the 21st century. The Plan will also make sufficient provision to diversify the housing that is available within the area. The redevelopment of the town will improve the image of the whole of the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area and will improve the range of important services and the leisure and retail offer available to the northern parts of the County Borough.

6.48

Bargoed and its suburbs are also part of the mid valleys conurbation and the town has an important role to play in the growth and well being of the County Borough as a whole. In particular, there may be an opportunity for Bargoed to develop as a centre for leisure activities for a large part

of the County Borough if current interest by the private sector in developing a multiscreen cinema and other leisure facilities can be incorporated into the town centre redevelopment scheme.

6.49

Rhymney is the key settlement for the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area and it has the potential to provide a tourism gateway into the County Borough from the Heads of the Valleys area and further afield. Centrally located in terms of the Heads of the Valleys area it is uniquely placed to help change the perception of the sub-region through enhancing the visitor and tourism role the area has to offer, by for example the development of the Valleys Regional Park. A Health and Social Care Resource Centre is proposed for Rhymney to serve the north of the borough. There are existing countryside recreation facilities in the area, together with the strategic cycle

routes and footpaths that run throughout the area also contribute to the considerable potential for enjoyment of the rural environment that Rhymney has to offer. The area is also well served by the Rhymney to Cardiff Railway line, which is due to benefit from investment to improve the frequency and capacity of the line early in the plan period.

6.50

As indicated, Rhymney also comprises a significant amount of employment land on existing industrial estates. The changing pattern of employment land requirements indicates that these sites offer the opportunity to accommodate alternative uses, whilst retaining an employment function, potentially diversifying the role of Rhymney to the benefit of the whole area.

6.51

Road access to the Upper Rhymney Valley has been improved with the recent development of the new road

at New Tredegar. When the Bargoed relief road (Angel Way) is completed in 2009, road access from north to south will be improved in this area too.

6.52

However, there is a continued need to improve the road network at key locations - in particular the substandard stretch of the A469 between New Tredegar and Pontlottyn - to bring the network up to a standard required to meet the needs of the 21st Century. This stretch must be addressed if the urban cluster is to function effectively and in particular for the potential and benefits of Bargoed to be fully realised.

6.53

The Upper Rhymney Valley is also the area that offers the most significant potential in terms of energy production within the County Borough due to the presence of coal reserves at Nant Llesg and the potential of the Upper

Rhymney Valley area in terms of some forms of renewable energy generation. The plan will need to balance the requirement to allow for renewable energy schemes and the extraction of minerals in an environmentally acceptable manner against the need to safeguard or enhance the natural environment to facilitate the future tourism development potential of the area and the amenity of residents.

6.54

Residential development will be concentrated on Bargoed and Rhymney, together with Pontlottyn, New Tredegar and Aberbargoed, which have good access to the rail network. Limited housing development will also be encouraged in the primarily residential villages of Princetown, Fochriw, Abertysswg and Deri, where there is a need for modern housing to maintain the viability of these former mining villages.

6.55

The villages of Argoed, Hollybush and Markham in the Sirhowy Valley are primarily residential. Although they are located in the Heads of the Valleys strategy area, they have strong links with Blackwood, unlike the Upper Rhymney Valley Settlements. In the plan period, however, they are likely to develop links with Bargoed also, once the town centre has been redeveloped. No major change is envisaged for these rather isolated areas, though the surrounding countryside, which includes the Markham Colliery site, could make a significant contribution to the Valleys Regional Park.

6.56

It is recognised that the most northerly towns and villages in the County Borough will also look to Merthyr Tydfil and other towns along the Heads of the Valleys corridor for job opportunities and urban facilities. Good transport links to Merthyr Tydfil in particular are therefore important.

Northern Connections Corridor - Mid Valleys East and Mid Valleys West

6.57

Since 1996, the Council Approved Unitary Development Plan for Caerphilly County Borough has targeted new development toward the 'Area of Growth' that was centred along the A472 Mid Valleys Corridor. As a consequence the community plan areas of the Mid Valleys East and Mid Valleys West, which form the Connections Corridor has become a focus for substantial private and public sector investment in recent years.

6.58

The Northern Connections Corridor is a unique area of the coalfield. It comprises a contiguous area of urban development spanning central Rhymney, Sirhowy and Ebbw Valley where the topography favours east-west as well north-south movements. Thus the settlement pattern is more like that of a conventional urban conurbation rather than the

traditional linear settlement structure of the typical Valleys town. The area, which stretches from Tredomen in the east to Newbridge in the west and as far north as Bargoed, was home to 65,000 people in 2001 - a larger population than Cwmbran or Merthyr Tydfil.

6.59

The Northern Connections Corridor has two complementary centres at its core, namely Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood. It also comprises one of the largest employment sites in the Valleys, namely Oakdale Business Park.

6.60

The A472 forms the main east west highway along the southern edge of the Northern Connections Corridor. From Newbridge to Blackwood the road is dual carriageway, as is the A469 between Caerphilly and Ystrad Mynach. The recently completed Sirhowy Enterprise Way links the major employment area at Oakdale/

Penyfan to the A472 and also provides fast access to Blackwood Town Centre. Construction is about to commence on Angel Way, ensuring that the northern part of the Connections Corridor also benefits from good road access.

6.61

The opening of the Ebbw Valley rail

passenger service in 2007 will mean that both the eastern and western sides of the Northern Connections Corridor will have rail access to Cardiff. Planned improvements to the Rhymney Valley line in 2006/07 has increased train frequencies to four an hour and train capacity from two to six carriages.

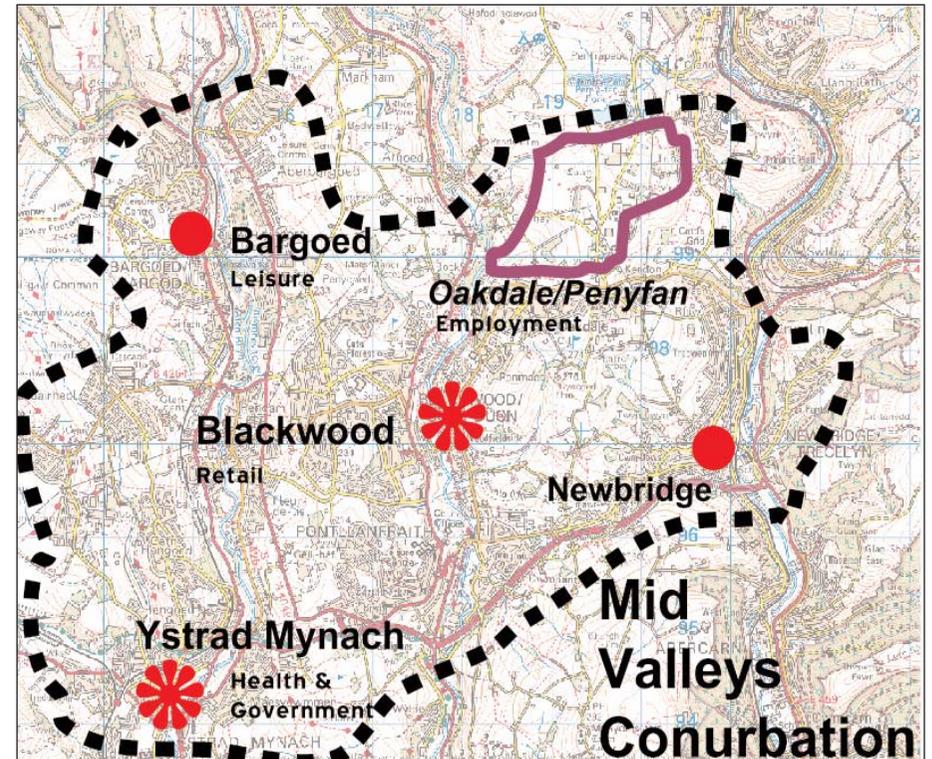


Figure 2: Plan illustrating the Mid Valleys Urban Conurbation

Oakdale Business Park

6.62

Oakdale Business Park together with Penyfan Industrial Estate comprises approximately a square kilometre (106 hectares) of existing and planned employment land. The Business Park has taken 6 years and over £10 million to reclaim, creating one of the largest employment plateaus in the South Wales Valleys. On completion the Business Park has the potential to pump thousands of jobs into the local economy to the tune of £100 million per year. The site has already attracted major inward investment projects and proposals are in place for the future development of the site, providing a blend of properties to suit the needs of modern business. The success of the Business Park is critical in terms of ensuring economic prosperity for residents of the County Borough, and in particular in offering much needed employment opportu-

nities to residents of the Heads of the Valley Regeneration Area.

6.63

Ystrad Mynach and **Blackwood** together with the Oakdale/Penyfan employment zone and Bargoed in the Heads of the Valleys area, form the core of the mid valleys conurbation. The principal towns in the conurbation have key roles as primary centres for the more deprived communities further north in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area. They have the potential to connect the most deprived parts of the County Borough in the north with economic, leisure and cultural opportunities offered in the Mid Valleys area and in the South of the County Borough.

6.64

Ystrad Mynach is well served in terms of the transportation network being located along the main Rhymney to Cardiff railway line, complemented

by a Park and Ride facility. It is strategically located at the intersection of the A469 and A472 road corridors. Given its excellent location the town has become the location for a number of vital public services including a College of Further Education and an Area Police Station. Its role as the main centre for local government in the County Borough will be enhanced with the completion of the new Council headquarters building at Tredomen. The most significant change will be the construction of a new Local General Hospital in 2010, which will serve the whole County Borough. The presence of all these major services means that Ystrad Mynach is also a significant employment centre, a role that will increase over the plan period.

6.65

Blackwood is the principal town centre in the Mid Valleys East. The town has experienced significant levels of

public and private investment in recent years with the development of substantial new retail units in both the north and south of the town. The town now contains more retail floor-space than any other town centre in the County Borough, including Caerphilly and as a result it is increasingly being recognised as an attractive sub regional shopping centre drawing people from a wide catchment area. CACI (leading marketing experts) estimate that the town's annual turnover of comparison goods expenditure is approximately £46m and rank it as 22nd among Welsh retail centres.

6.66

The town is also easily accessible by car from Oakdale Business Park (the largest employment site in the County Borough) by the Chartist Bridge in the north. There is considerable potential therefore to exploit the relationship between the town and the business park.

6.67

Access to the town has improved dramatically with the development of the Sirhowy Enterprise Way and with the investment in the new Blackwood Bus Station. There is however a need to further improve the links to the town from the Heads of the Valley Regeneration Area and from Ystrad Mynach. In particular there is a need to establish more effective public transport links to the Rhymney Valley Railway line at Ystrad Mynach and to ensure that new links to the Ebbw Valley Railway line at Newbridge are created. There is also a need to ensure that the strategic road network is upgraded at key locations, in order to ensure ease of movement between Blackwood and Ystrad Mynach. This all points to the need for a comprehensive public transport network for the mid valleys conurbation.

6.68

Blackwood will be critical to the suc-

cess of the Connections Corridor in servicing the needs of the population in the immediate and wider area including the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area. The emphasis in Blackwood over the plan period will be to build on its existing strengths as an excellent sub regional shopping centre and continue to improve the retail offer of the town, whilst developing a new role as an employment centre, particularly for office development.

6.69

Key peripheral centres in the Connections Corridor include Nelson in the west whose importance will grow for tourism and employment and Newbridge in the east, which will become an important sustainable development location when its new railway station opens.

6.70

Nelson is the most westerly settlement in the Mid Valley's West Community

Plan area and is situated at a strategic location on the A472 approximately 2 miles from the Junction with the A470.

6.71

The village centre in Nelson offers a wide range of small shops and services to serve not only the Nelson area but also adjoining villages in Merthyr County Borough such as Treharris, Trelewis and Quakers Yard. Recent improvements to the central bus station have significantly improved the accessibility of the village centre to the surrounding area.

6.72

The national cycle route (47) runs through Nelson adjacent to the Wern Woodland Park and links the area to Penallta Community Park. Together these facilities provide a very attractive rural backdrop to Nelson. Wern Woodland Park also provides a valuable link for visitors to the area to a range of small shops and services

within the historic village centre. Given the range of heritage and visitor attractions in the vicinity including Llancaiach Fawr living history museum, Nelson could have significant tourism potential.

6.73

Nelson also comprises a number of existing and proposed employment sites on its periphery. In particular land at Ty Du has been safeguarded for employment land for many years. Given the proximity of the Ty Du site to the prestige office complex in Ystrad Mynach an opportunity exists to promote Nelson as an excellent location for the development of innovative employment opportunities or as a centre for higher education facilities to complement the Tredomen Business Complex.

6.74

Newbridge is situated at a strategic location at the crossroads of the A472 and the A467. The opening of

the Ebbw Vale Railway and the new rail halt in Newbridge scheduled for 2007/08 will connect the town with the Southern Connections Corridor and with the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area in the north. The planned improvements to the public transport infrastructure, which includes a significant park and ride facility, will offer opportunities for economic diversification and improve the prospects of attracting new investment into the town.

6.75

The town centre currently offers a wide range of small independent shops and services to serve not only the Newbridge area but also the surrounding area. The emphasis in Newbridge over the plan period will be to build on its existing strengths as an excellent local shopping centre and continue to improve the retail offer of the town, whilst diversifying the town centre through the redevelopment of key brownfield sites to

provide appropriate opportunities for new economic activity, cultural facilities at the 'Memo', housing, public open space and car parking.

6.76

The redevelopment of the former South Celynen Colliery site for housing will serve to diversify the housing stock within the area and it is anticipated that this, together with the wide range of leisure and sporting activities available in the area will help to encourage young people to remain within Newbridge.

6.77

Where there are suitable sites, residential development will be concentrated in the mid valleys conurbation, together with Nelson, Hengoed, Tir y Berth and Maesycwmmmer, which have good access to the rail network. Crumlin will also be favoured as the County Borough is seeking to secure a rail halt there. Limited housing development will also be allowed

in the villages of Gelligaer and Trinant, where there is a need for a greater variety of housing to maintain the viability of these settlements.

6.78

The A472 is the primary east-west transport route in this area. The stretch between Newbridge and Blackwood is a modern dual carriageway but the remainder of the route is not up to the role that the strategy assigns to the Northern Connections Corridor. The section through Maesycwmmmer is of particular concern and will be addressed in the Plan.

6.79

The Northern Connections Corridor continues outside the County Borough to Abercynon in the west and Pontypool in the east. The capacity of these single carriageway sections of the A472 should also be examined in the context of the South East Wales integrated city region.

6.80

The welcome reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Ebbw Valley line in 2007 will not disguise the fact that the service will have to offer a greater frequency of trains and a greater number of stations if it is to provide a truly sustainable alternative to road traffic in that area. The Plan will therefore include provision for additional stations at Crumlin and Abercarn.

Southern Connections Corridor - Lower Islwyn Area and Caerphilly Basin

6.81

The principal towns of Caerphilly and Risca-Pontymister are separated by a mountain range and therefore although both are part of the Southern Connections Corridor they do not form a single conurbation like the key centres in the Northern Connections Corridor.

6.82

As Cardiff and Newport have become more successful, Caerphilly and to a lesser extent Risca have experienced increased development pressure. Significant levels of new development have occurred, particularly in the Caerphilly Basin as a result in recent years.

6.83

Whilst there is a need for Risca and Caerphilly to continue to capitalise on their proximity to Newport and Cardiff respectively and exploit the economic opportunities that this can bring, there is also a need to ensure that these areas do not 'over-heat' to the extent that economic progress is outweighed by negative environmental effects of over development. The priority and emphasis in this area will be on the redevelopment of existing sites and not on the release of any substantial new greenfield land. The plan will need to ensure, however that all the brownfield sites are not

developed for housing to the detriment of the important employment, retailing and service roles played by the key settlements.

6.84

Of the smaller settlements in the Southern Connections Corridor, Bedwas/Trethomas is by far the largest (population 8,000) and has a more than local role in employment and cultural provision in the Caerphilly Basin.

6.85

The Caerphilly Basin is the only substantial district of the County Borough not to have a country park. In view of the importance of developing the Valleys Regional Park during the plan period, the County Borough will investigate the possibility for creating a country park in the Caerphilly Basin area, linked in to the emerging cyclepath network and complementing the already strong tourism offer of Caerphilly Castle.

Lower Islwyn Area**6.86**

Risca-Pontymister is the main centre for services in this district. The College of Further Education at Crosskeys serves an even wider area. The commercial function of the area is largely overshadowed by its close proximity to Newport and to some extent Blackwood. However the possibility exists to restructure the town centre to attract inward investment and improve the attractiveness of the area to residents and visitors alike. Scope exists to exploit the opportunities afforded by the re-opening of the Ebbw Valley railwayline and the restoration of the canal. An opportunity exists to provide for new mixed-use development comprising employment, retailing and housing development on brownfield land adjacent to the River Ebbw. Care will need to be taken however as large areas of the valley bottom are identified as being at risk from flooding.

6.87

The A467 is the main route that links Abercarn and Cwmcarn to Risca, the M4 and Newport in the South. The A4048 links the Lower Sirhowy Valley to the nearby sub-regional centre of Blackwood and to employment opportunities in the Connections Corridor to the north. The opening of the Ebbw Valley passenger line with stations at Crosskeys and Pontymister, will improve public transport access to/from Newbridge in the north and to/from Risca, Cardiff (and eventually Newport) in the south.

6.88

Abercarn, Cwmcarn, Ty Sign, Pontywaun, Cwmfelinfach, Wattsville and Ynysddu are primarily residential villages, though most also have an employment role.

6.89

The surrounding countryside includes the Cwmcarn Forest Drive and the Sirhowy Country Park making the dis-

trict significant for tourism and recreation. This role is planned to increase in the context of the Valleys Regional Park.

Caerphilly Basin

6.90

Caerphilly is the principal town in the Caerphilly Basin and it plays an important sub-regional role in relation to shopping, employment, leisure, and tourism. Proposals for development will be welcomed which support this role in a way that is compatible with the strategy and policies of the Plan. Appropriate allocations will be made within settlement boundaries to provide for this. As a significant employment location there will be a need to allocate a limited amount of land for employment use within the Caerphilly Basin. However the priority and emphasis will be to redevelop existing sites, including the town centre, to enhance its important role as a retail and employment hub.

6.91

Bedwas has maintained a strong industrial base and the village accommodates two large successful industrial estates at Bedwas House and Pant Glas totalling approximately 61 hectares. It is proposed that the area continues to provide this important function over the plan period.

6.92

Proposals to enhance Bedwas Workmen's Hall and improve the surrounding area are part of a developing role for the village in the provision of cultural and recreational facilities for the Caerphilly Basin.

6.93

The area could have tourism potential given its close proximity to Caerphilly Castle and to Caerphilly Town Centre. The redevelopment of Bedwas Colliery will have a significant impact on the future role and function of Bedwas and Trethomas in this regard. This large brownfield site

offers an opportunity to expand the residential role of Bedwas and also provide associated community and leisure facilities to further increase the attractiveness of the area. The redevelopment of the site would require substantial highway improvements to be undertaken in the area.

6.94

There is also an opportunity to exploit the village's riverside location by developing a riverside park from an existing area of woodland meadow situated between Bedwas and Trethomas.

6.95

Llanbradach, Abertridwr, Senghenydd, Trethomas, Graig y Rhacca, Waterloo, Rudry and Draethen are primarily residential settlements. Llanbradach is the only area served by a railway station and a major park and ride facility is planned there.

6.96

There is a need to establish more

effective and transparent links to the public transport system in order to access Caerphilly Town Centre and the surrounding area. There is also a need to ensure that the strategic road network is upgraded at key locations, in order to ensure ease of movement within and beyond the Caerphilly Basin Area.

6.97

Caerphilly is only 17 minutes by train from the centre of Cardiff. This is an extremely important economic advantage that the Plan will seek to exploit. Road and rail links to Cardiff are particularly important as they serve not only local movements but also the massive commuter flows from further north in the Rhymney Valley.

6.98

Similarly, road and rail links to both Cardiff and Newport will be taken into account in the Plan's proposals for the Lower Iswyn area.

OVERALL SUMMARY

6.99

The overall strategy that emerges from the application of the eight strands or objectives to the above settlement analysis is as follows:

- The development of new housing will be encouraged in former mining villages that currently have a poor choice of property types and lack modern residential development. Major housing growth however, will be concentrated in those settlements with good public transport facilities and in particular, bearing in mind regional commuting patterns, those with access to a railway station.
- Employment growth will be focussed on the town of Caerphilly, whose proximity to Cardiff presents particular opportunities, and in the Northern Connections Corridor, particularly on sites in the mid valleys conurbation. New sites will be identified close to railway stations, to encourage two way commuting on the rail network.
- Retail, leisure, health, training and other urban facilities will also be concentrated in the two principal hubs - Caerphilly town and the mid valleys conurbation. Some specialist facilities will be developed in the key peripheral towns of Rhymney, Nelson, Bedwas and greater Risca.
- The Mid Valleys Conurbation of Ystrad Mynach/Blackwood/Bargoed/Newbridge should play a central role in the regeneration of the Valleys due to its strategic location and critical mass of 65,000 people. For this to occur sustainably an integrated public transport network needs to be developed for the Conurbation.
- The countryside will be protected and promoted as a positive asset for recreation and tourism, with particular regard to the contribution the County Borough can make to the Valleys Regional Park.
- Areas of Search for the location of waste treatment and recycling facilities will be identified throughout the County Borough. **Appendices Section 1** provides the latest estimated requirements for in-building site provision in the County Borough.
- The Council is presently examining which areas in the County Borough, if any, should be safeguarded for minerals.

7 STRATEGIC POLICIES

7.1

The general development strategy of the LDP is given effect in Policy SP1, and the other strategic policies which are listed below reflect the objectives of the Preferred Strategy and also respect the four themes of the Community Plan Strategy. These strategic policies will be supported by detailed policies in the Deposit LDP, which will secure the objectives of the strategic policies in relation to each topic area.

Sustainable Development Strategy

SP1

LAND IS IDENTIFIED FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN AND ADJACENT TO EXISTING TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN ORDER TO MEET ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. PROMOTE RESOURCE EFFICIENT SETTLEMENTS;

2. SUSTAIN AND PROMOTE THE SPECIFIC ROLE AND FUNCTION OF INDIVIDUAL SETTLEMENTS;
3. REGENERATE OUR DEPRIVED AREAS;
4. SUSTAIN THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF AREAS;
5. DEVELOP AND USE LAND ON THE BASIS OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS; AND
6. EXPLOIT BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITIES WHEREVER APPROPRIATE AND POSSIBLE

Good Design

SP2

THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF LAND WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THE DESIGN OF THE DEVELOPMENT POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTES TO THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

Protection Policy

SP3

THE FOLLOWING ARE PROTECTED FROM INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT:

1. AREAS DESIGNATED BECAUSE OF THEIR LANDSCAPE, BIODIVERSITY, AND/OR AGRICULTURAL VALUE;
2. FORMAL LEISURE FACILITIES, PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL GREEN SPACE;
3. THE QUALITY OF OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT;
4. EMPLOYMENT LAND AND BUILDINGS WHERE THE EMPLOYMENT LAND BANK IS THREATENED

Renewable Energy

SP4

PROPOSALS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO MEETING NATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGETS ARE ENCOURAGED WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED

THAT THERE IS NO UNACCEPTABLE IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY, LANDSCAPE, BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURE.

Climate Change

SP5

ALL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ARE REQUIRED TO INCORPORATE RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES TO REDUCE CO² EMISSIONS BY AT LEAST 10%

Allocation for Population

Growth and Housing Land

SP6

LAND IS IDENTIFIED FOR DEVELOPMENT TO:

1. ACCOMMODATE A POPULATION INCREASE TO A LEVEL OF APPROXIMATELY 180,000 PEOPLE AT APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTY BOROUGH;

2. MEET A NEED OF UP TO 9,500 RESIDENTIAL UNITS OF MIXED TENURE WITHIN THE COUNTY BOROUGH IN THE PERIOD 2006-2021

Allocation for Employment Land

SP7

LAND IS IDENTIFIED FOR BUSINESS, GENERAL INDUSTRY, STORAGE, DISTRIBUTION DEVELOPMENT, AND WASTE MANAGEMENT/RESOURCE RECOVERY

Transportation

SP8

A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT POLICY IS PURSUED TO REALISE:

1. A CHANGE IN TRAVEL PATTERNS IN FAVOUR OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND OTHER NON-CAR TRANSPORTATION MODES BY FAVOURING DEVELOPMENT CLOSE TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT NODES;
2. AN IMPROVEMENT TO IDENTIFIED PARTS OF THE STRATEGIC FOOT-

PATH, CYCLEPATH AND HIGHWAY NETWORK IN ORDER TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY;

3. THE EASING OF CONGESTION POINTS ON OUR CORE ROAD NETWORK

Community Infrastructure and Affordable Housing

SP9

THE COUNCIL WILL NEGOTIATE PLANNING (SECTION 106) OBLIGATIONS WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS REQUIRED TO:

1. PROVIDE OR CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS NECESSARY PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC OR ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED AS A RESULT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SITE OR AS A RESULT OF THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF A NUMBER OF SITES ON AN AREA;
2. MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF A DEVELOPMENT OR A GROUP OF DEVELOPMENTS ON AN AREA;

3. REMOVE OBSTACLES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNED DEVELOPMENT;
4. CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS BY THE PROVISION OF AN APPROPRIATE PROPORTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Town Centre Hierarchy

SP10

THE MAIN TOWN CENTRES ARE SUPPORTED AND WILL BE ENHANCED BASED ON THEIR ROLE WITHIN THE FOLLOWING HIERARCHY:

PRINCIPAL TOWNS:

1. BARGOED;
2. BLACKWOOD;
3. CAERPHILLY;
4. RISCA-PONTYMISTER;
5. YSTRAD MYNACH

KEY SETTLEMENTS:

1. BEDWAS;
2. NELSON;

3. NEWBRIDGE;
4. RHYMNEY

Waste Management

SP11

AREAS OF SEARCH ARE DESIGNATED TO AID THE IDENTIFICATION OF SUITABLE SITES FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE RECOVERY FACILITIES

Protection of Mineral Reserves

SP12

MINERAL RESOURCES WHICH HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS RESERVES WHICH POTENTIALLY MEET NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NEED ARE SAFEGUARDED WHERE THEIR IMPACTS ARE ACCEPTABLE:

1. WHERE APPROPRIATE, KNOWN SITES OF SAND AND GRAVEL RESERVES WILL BE PROTECTED
2. NO AREAS OF COAL RESERVES ARE PROTECTED

8 LAND SUPPLY TO MEET THE PREFERRED STRATEGY

Existing Commitments

8.1

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. As an integral part of considering which sites should be carried forward within the LDP it will be necessary to undertake a comprehensive re-assessment of sites that do not have the benefit of planning consent. Sites with planning consent will be carried forward as appropriate.

Candidate Sites

8.2

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, frontloading the site assessment procedure to the beginning of the process.

8.3

In order to obtain the necessary evidence in respect of the suitability or otherwise of land for inclusion in the development plan the Council invited interested individuals and organisations to submit candidate sites for consideration. Approximately six hundred sites have been considered by the Council for a variety of land uses as a result of this process.

8.4

Appendices Section 8 outlines the methodology that has been used to assess these sites.

8.5

Appendices Section 10 provides a summary of the outcome of the site

assessment work and provides an indication in terms of those sites are acceptable for development in principle; and also provides an indication as to which of the strategy options each site accords.

Strategic Sites

8.6

The Council considers that there are no strategic sites in that the omission of any one of them would not jeopardise the successful implementation of the Preferred Strategy, with the possible exception of the existing allocation at Oakdale Business Park. On the other hand the candidate housing sites provisionally preferred by the assessment process, together with the undeveloped committed housing sites, are more than capable of delivering the Preferred Strategy, within the growth range identified of 7,500 to 9,500 housing units. See **Appendices Section 10** for the summary.

8.7

In making this land supply assessment it is assumed that an average housing density figure of 35 units per hectare will be achieved.

9 SEA/SA ASSESSMENTS OF THE STRATEGY OPTIONS

Introduction and Process

9.1

European Directive (2001/42/EC), commonly called the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, requires that development plans be the subject of continual assessment throughout the plan production process to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated into the decision making process of the plan. In addition to this, legislation also requires that all development plans are subject to an appraisal against sustainability considerations (i.e. economic, social and environmental factors). In line with current guidance and good practice, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) will be undertaken in a combined approach, producing one SEA/SA for the emerging LDP.

9.2

The SEA/SA is divided into two distinct parts, Part 1 which encompasses the SEA/SA process up until the publication of the Preferred and Alternative Strategies (often referred to as the Pre-Deposit Consultation), and Part 2 which encompasses the SEA/SA process from Pre-Deposit Consultation to the production of the Detailed Deposit Plan and through to Submission to the Welsh Assembly Government.

9.3

Part 1 of the SEA/SA is comprised of three documents, namely:

I. Document 1: The Scoping Report

The process of producing the SEA/SA begins with a review of the current state of the environment for the area of the plan. This review incorporates environmental, social and economic factors in its assessment identifying, where relevant, important issues.

Then the examination is rolled forward to the end of the plan period to provide the control scenario against which the effects of the LDP and its policies can be considered later in the process. Finally Sustainability Objectives are identified from the issues raised through the examination of the environment. Sustainability Objectives are the basis for the assessments of the effects of the LDP throughout the plan process and also form the basis for monitoring the SEA/SA.

II. Document 2: The Review of Relevant Plans, Programmes and Policies

The SEA Directive requires that a review of all plans, programmes and policies at all levels (from European level to local level), which may have implications for the emerging LDP, be undertaken to identify implications for the LDP and SEA/SA processes.

III. Document 3: The Assessment of the Preferred and Alternative LDP Strategies

The final document comprising Part 1 of the SEA/SA is the review of the preferred strategy for the LDP, along with "reasonable" alternatives. The assessments are undertaken against Assessment Tests (questions) that are based upon the Sustainability Objectives identified in the Scoping Report. Each of the strategies has been assessed against the tests and their likely effects have been recorded. In addition the strategies have been compared and ranked by order of their level of sustainability.

The Results of the Assessment of the Strategies

9.4

Assessments were undertaken for the Preferred Strategy and the three Alternative Strategies. The detail of these assessments is included in the

"SEA/SA Part 1 - Document 3 : The Assessment of the Preferred and Alternative LDP Strategies" document and it is not proposed to include them here. In summary, both Strategy Option A (Continuation of the UDP Strategy) and Strategy Option B (Urban Containment Strategy) realised significant levels of negative effects upon the environment, identifying these strategies as being weak in sustainability terms. In contrast Strategy Option C (Sustainable Settlements Strategy) and Strategy Option D (The Hybrid Strategy) realised significant levels of positive results, identifying these strategies as being strong in sustainability terms.

9.5

When compared to each other Strategy Option C (Sustainable Settlements Strategy) comes out as the most sustainable of all the strategies, with Strategy Option D (The Hybrid Strategy) as a close second. The other two strategies were significantly

behind Strategies C and D. It should be noted that neither Strategy Option C nor Strategy Option D actually scored positive results in all aspects of the assessment. Indeed both strategy options scored the same number of negative results, i.e. 8 from two assessments [40 tests in total). The major difference between the two strategy options was that Strategy Option C provided more detail in respect of the location consideration in identifying allocations. This meant that Strategy Option C gained more positive results. Strategy Option D, however, gained more neutral results relating to either a lack of information to determine effects, or that there were issues on how the strategy would be implemented.

9.6

The critical part of the whole process is how the results of the assessment influence and change the LDP, making it more sustainable. It should be

noted that it is not the role of the SEA/SA to produce a truly sustainable plan; rather it is incorporated in decision making with the result of making the LDP more sustainable. Consequently, whichever of the Strategy Options is used as the basis for the LDP, all of them would require changes to seek to change the negative and neutral results to positive ones. These changes usually take one of two forms:

- I. Changes to the text of the document. Commonly used to clarify how the strategy is applied or to address issues that have not been addressed.
- II. Mitigation, i.e. the provision of some form of gain that will compensate for a negative impact that cannot be changed.

The Preferred Strategy for the LDP

9.7

Following consideration of the results of the assessments, Strategy Options

A and B were considered to require radical change and as such were not considered appropriate for use as the LDP Strategy. The other strategies were close in terms of their assessment outcomes, although Strategy Option C was considered to be the most sustainable strategy.

9.8

However, Strategy Option D (The Hybrid Strategy) was preferred over Option C for the following reasons:

- I. The Hybrid Strategy was no worse than Option C, as it realised the same number of negative results in the assessment.
- II. The Hybrid Strategy can achieve a similar if not identical status in terms of sustainability that Option C can, if relevant changes and mitigation are made to the strategy.
- III. The Hybrid strategy has been produced through extensive and comprehensive public involve

ment, which identified the 8 key factors upon which the strategy is based.

- IV. The Hybrid Strategy represents the better option for maximising the opportunities that are likely to arise throughout the plan period.
- V. In accordance with the overall aim of the SEA/SA Assessment process, the Hybrid Strategy represents the better option for meeting the needs of the authority throughout the plan period in the most sustainable manner.

Mitigation for the Preferred Strategy

9.9

The assessment results for the Preferred Strategy have been considered, along with any comments arising from the assessment process. The SEA/SA Document 3 - The Assessment of the Preferred and Alternative Strategies provides the details of the

assessments and the comments. In response a series of changes are proposed for the Preferred Strategy in order to make the LDP more sustainable. The Table included at **Appendices Section 12** outlines the changes that are sought from the assessment process, and also identifies the Council's response to them.

The Next Steps

9.10

The whole of the SEA/SA Part 1 (Documents 1, 2 & 3) will be the subject of consultation as part of the consultation on the LDP Strategy. Comments in respect of both the SEA/SA and the LDP Strategy are welcomed during this period. Any comments on the SEA/SA will be considered in due course and changes to the SEA/SA will undoubtedly be made as a result. Changes to the LDP Strategy will be re-assessed against the Assessment Test once they are completed. Any changes or mitiga-

tion identified as part of that re-assessment process will be incorporated into the strategy.

9.11

Once the Strategy has been amended, work will commence on drafting the detailed plan that will be the basis for the Deposit Consultation period. The SEA/SA will devise Assessment Tests relevant for the detailed plan and the detailed plan will be the subject of assessment throughout its production.

10 DEPOSIT PLAN DRAFT FORMAT

There follows a draft format for the
Caerphilly CBC LDP:

Strategic Section

- Plan Aims and Objectives
- Vision Statement
- Plan Strategy including its Key
Diagram
- Strategic Policies

Borough Wide Policies

including protection policies and
development control policies.

Area Policies

including area specific development,
area protection policies and alloca-
tions.

Topic Policies

including topic specific policies and
allocations.

Implementation & Monitoring

Identify means of implementation
and monitoring indicators at all levels

Background

- Description of the new plan
system and plan preparation
process as determined by the
DA.
- Background of Government
Guidance, Sub Regional Policy,
and the Local Context such as
the Council's Community Plan
Strategy, and its four themes.

Proposals Map

11 DRAFT LIST OF POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

Existing Supplementary Planning Guidance to the UDP will be reconfirmed, revised and extended and together with the following additional subjects they represent a possible draft list:

- **Building Better Places to Live Design Guide** - reconfirm
- **Householder Developments Design Guide** - reconfirm
- **Business and General Industry Design Guide** - reconfirm
- **Caerphilly Basin Strategic Highway Network Obligation** - reconfirm

Additional

- **Design** - this would need to take account of our existing SPG design guidance and extend, for example to transport, retail, leisure and historic environment

- **Planning Obligations** - including Affordable and Special Needs Housing, Education Needs, and Open Space and Outdoor Sport Provision
- **Strategic Highway Network Obligation** - extension to new areas
- **Renewable Energy**
- **Trees & Development**
- **New Developments/Buildings in the Countryside**
- **Town Centre Plans**
- **Site Development Briefs** - where development complexities require them
- **Constraints Map/Schedule** - Intended to identify constraints information that should be kept constantly up to date, and possibly to also include matters determined/designated outside

the Plan Process under separate legislative procedures - e.g. the SAC, the SSSIs, the SINCs, Nature Reserves, Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, Flood Zone Maps from Tan 15

This list may be extended and revised at the Deposit Plan Stage

12 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Caerphilly LDP Delivery Agreement (agreed by WAG, 4th May 2006)
- Report of Findings: Visioning Workshops (June 2006)
- Report of Findings: Development of Alternative Strategic Options (Sept 2006)
- Sites Register: (publicly available 18th April 2007)
- Topic Papers:
 - Population and Housing
 - Employment
 - Transportation

