RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

APRIL 2022 – APRIL 2037

PREFERRED STRATEGY
JANUARY 2024

RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1.1   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) are revising their Local Development Plan (LDP) for the County Borough, which will cover the period 2022-2037. The existing LDP covers the period 2006-2021 and was adopted in 2011. The Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) will build upon the existing plan. RCTCBC recognise that the planning system, with the RLDP at its core, has a significant role to play in shaping the County Borough to ensure that it grows in a sustainable manner, whilst meeting community needs and aspirations.

1.1.2   The Revised LDP will be the statutory land-use planning document for the County Borough (excluding the area within the jurisdiction of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority) and will set out the vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf and its communities. The Replacement LDP will also set out the amount and location of new development, as well as being the basis for future development management decisions (planning applications).

1.1.3   The Council are now at the Preferred Strategy stage of the Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) preparation process. A visual representation of the stages involved within the Revised LDP process is set out below, with the current Preferred Strategy stage highlighted in white.

Annual Monitoring Reports & Review Report

Adoption of the Revised LDP 2022-2037

Delivery Agreement

Evidence
SA / SEA
Engagement / Consultation

Call for candidate sites & evidence gathering

Inspector's Report

Submission & Examination in Public

Deposit Plan

Preferred Strategy (Pre-Deposit Plan)
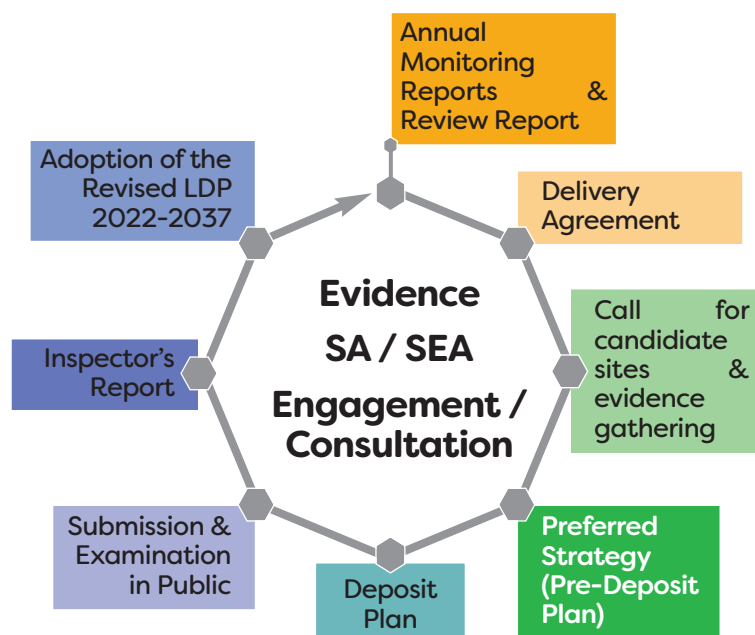
Rhondda Cynon Taf

1.1.4   Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) lies at the heart of the South Wales Valleys and covers an area of approximately 37,130ha (excluding land within Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority). At the 2021 census, RCT had a resident population of 237,700, which is a 1.4% increase in population since 2011 (234,000).

What is a Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP)?

1.1.5   The Revised Local Development Plan is a revision of the adopted LDP and will set out the vision and proposals for development within Rhondda Cynon Taf over the period 2022-2037.

1.1.6   The RLDP must be based upon robust evidence and a thorough understanding of the needs, constraints and opportunities within RCT. As such, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to prepare and keep an up-to-date "Evidence Base", which covers all aspects of the social, environmental, economic and cultural characteristics of the County Borough.

1.1.7   The RLDP Preferred Strategy builds upon the evidence gathered during the life of the adopted LDP (2006-2021) to determine how the current LDP has fared. This includes evidence contained within the Council's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), existing policies, the Sustainability Appraisal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment) and the Review Report.

1.1.8   Further, considerable up-to-date evidence has been prepared and gathered in the formulation stages of the Preferred Strategy. Evidence base documents are referred to throughout the Preferred Strategy, as appropriate, in accordance with the relevant topic areas. This Evidence Base is publicly available material that will continue to be updated throughout the coming stages of the RLDP. The evidence-based approach will ensure the production of a plan that can deliver for RCT and will comply with the test of "soundness" at the Examination stage.

1.1.9   **The RCT Revised LDP should seek to:**
- Have a clear and deliverable vision, based on sound place-making principles, embedded into local policy to facilitate sustainable development.
- Provide a coherent strategy that reflects the aspirations of the Council, key stakeholders and our communities.
- Facilitate growth in settlements that have identified capacity, in line with the Settlement Hierarchy.
- Identify areas that can accommodate infrastructure and employment/housing provision, whilst simultaneously protecting RCT's distinctive built and natural environments.
- Facilitate, in land-use terms, the objectives of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the National Sustainable Place-making Outcomes, the Council's Corporate Plan and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan.
- Utilise national policy, plans and guidance, particularly Planning Policy Wales and Future Wales, to provide a robust framework for development within RCT, which defines the role and function of places.
- Identify how RCT will change and develop over the lifetime of the RLDP (to 2037).

Further details on the Plans and Policy context that the RLDP should accord with are provided within Section 2 of this paper.

What is a Preferred Strategy?

1.1.10   Local Development Plan Regulations 14 and 15 require all LPAs to prepare a "Preferred Strategy" which is also known as the Council's 'Pre-Deposit' proposals. The Preferred Strategy stage is prepared prior to the following stage of RLDP preparation, which is the formulation of the final Deposit RLDP, which will be the subject of an independent Examination in public.

1.1.11   The pre-deposit stage for Rhondda Cynon Taf sets out the key issues, vision/objectives and strategy options, before presenting a Preferred Strategy, which the Council will pursue. This pre-deposit stage is essentially the 'backbone' of the Revised LDP process, formally setting out the levels of growth and spatial distribution for RCT. The Preferred Strategy sets the direction for the RLDP that will allow our stakeholders and communities to provide constructive 'Representations' (comments and feedback on proposals) to inform the Deposit Plan (scheduled for publication in January/February 2025).

1.1.12   The content and process of developing our Preferred Strategy is displayed in the following diagram:
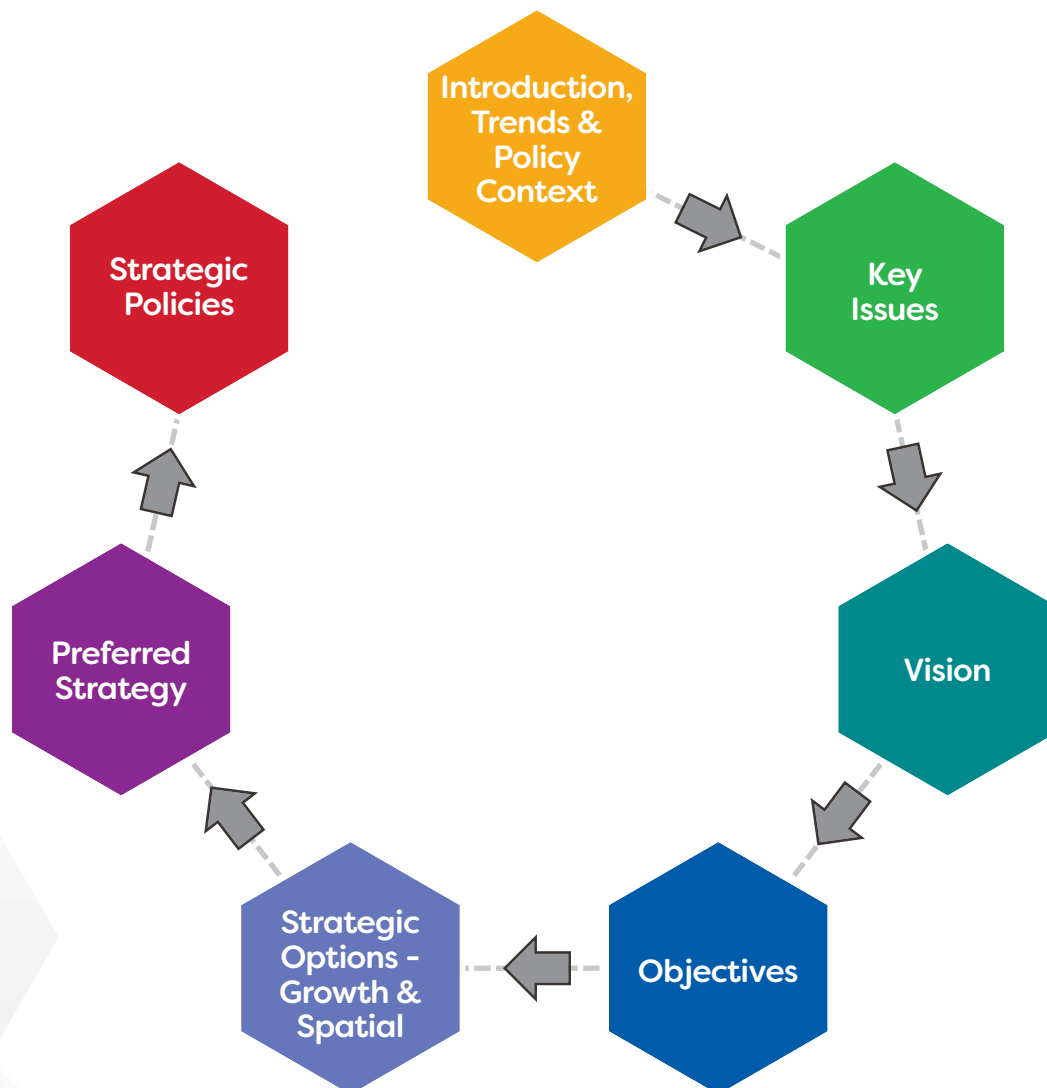
1.1.13   The RCT Preferred Strategy aims to provide realistic options that reflect our evidence, vision and objectives. RCT intends to meet the evidenced needs of the County Borough and its communities by ensuring that proposals can genuinely be delivered over the plan period (up to 2037), whilst simultaneously conforming to national policy and having due regard for relevant regional and local initiatives.

1.1.14   To reiterate, the Preferred Strategy is the first presentation of the vision and objectives, alongside the strategic growth and spatial options for RCT. It also includes those Key Sites, identified as being integral to the delivery of the RLDP. Whilst the Preferred Strategy contains many details pertaining to the ambitions for the County Borough, it does have limitations. It should be noted that the Preferred Strategy does not contain site-specific allocations or identify settlement boundaries (with the exception of Key Sites) nor does it contain a final evaluation of submitted Candidate Sites. Strategic Policies are set out in the Preferred Strategy, although it doesn't contain detailed policies. These will all feature within the Deposit Plan, scheduled for publication in January/February 2025. The Candidate Site Register is being published alongside the Preferred Strategy and indicates whether a site has progressed through to Stage 2 of the process or has been unsuccessful at Stage 1.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT & LOCAL EVIDENCE BASE

National and Regional Considerations

2.1.1 The RLDP and its Preferred Strategy must be in general conformity with regulations, plans, policies and other guidance at national, regional and local level. Accordingly, these have helped form the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, together with the Evidence Base and are listed below, alongside their relationship to the Preferred Strategy.

NATIONAL:

The following national documentation is applicable throughout Wales:

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040, 2021

The National Development Framework, entitled 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040' is the highest tier of development plan in Wales, focusing on issues and challenges at a national scale.

The NDF sets the direction for growth, development and infrastructure investment in Wales until 2040. It sets a strategy and strategic policies for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, decarbonisation, developing resilient ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of communities within Wales.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11), 2021

Planning Policy Wales 11 (PPW) sets out the land-use planning policies and overarching framework for sustainable development in Wales, inclusive of the sustainable development principle in decision-making. It also integrates the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (WBFGA) into national planning policy.

As with its predecessor, PPW 10, it requires planners to embrace the concept of place-making in both plan making and development management decisions, in order to achieve sustainable places. Given that place-making is central to the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act; it is felt that place-making must capitalise on a local community's assets, inspiration and potential, with the intention of creating development that promotes people's health, happiness and well-being.

Development Plans Manual (Edition 3), 2020

The Manual provides up-to-date and fit for purpose practical guidance regarding plan preparation. As such, since the introduction of a raft of planning legislation from c. 2013 onward, alongside changes to national policy, it was deemed an appropriate time to commence revisions to the document.

Changes include the option for LPAs to undertake an 'Integrated Sustainability Assessment', which includes not only SA/SEA but also key elements of The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, The Equalities Act, the Welsh language and Health Impact Assessments. The inclusion of such will enable a more transparent, holistic and rounded assessment of the sustainability implications of the plan.

Building Better Places – The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures – Placemaking and the COVID-19 recovery, 2020

The paper, published in July 2020, highlights the key, existing planning policies and tools that should be used to aid the recovery of Wales, as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The paper encourages planners to display creativity and ingenuity in devising innovative solutions and responses to the environmental, social, cultural and economic recovery of Wales, at all scales. The paper further encourages local planning authorities to be bold in their vision for emerging/revised local development plans (LDPs).

Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy, 2021

Llwybr Newydd is the Transport Strategy for Wales, which sets out a 'new path' for transport across the Country over the next 20 years.

Its primary aim is to create a more prosperous, green and equal society for all. As well as setting out short and long-term priorities and ambitions, the Welsh Government also presents nine mini plans that explain how the aims will be delivered within different transport modes and sectors..

The Planning Act, 2015

The Planning Act, introduced in 2015, provided a revised legislative framework to reform the planning system. The Act contains five key objectives, in addition to providing a legal basis for the introduction of a National Development Framework (known as Future Wales covering the period 2020-2040) and Strategic Development Plans to cover three regions within Wales.

The SDP for the ten South East Wales authorities, of which RCT is one, will provide a blue-print and strategy for development and investment across the region, although work has not yet commenced on the SDP. Importantly, the Act also makes provisions for the 'use of the Welsh language' to be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015

The Well-Being of Future Generation Act provides a framework for improving Wales's welfare, requiring public bodies to think about the long-term implications of their decisions. The Act places sustainable development at its heart to improve the cultural, social, environmental and economic well-being of Wales. The Act sets out the 'five ways of working', as well as the seven well-being goals that public bodies must achieve.

The Environment (Wales) Act, 2016

The Environment Act received Royal Assent on 21st March 2016 and seeks to provide legislation to proactively and sustainably manage the natural resources of Wales.

The Act includes a new biodiversity duty, which aims to aid the reversal of decline and secure the long-term resilience and future of biodiversity in Wales. The Act also tasks Welsh Ministers with setting targets to reduce greenhouse emissions and the setting of carbon budgets.

The Housing (Wales) Act, 2014

In September 2014, The Housing (Wales) Act received Royal Assent.

The primary aims of the legislation include: The provision of sufficient regulation governing private rented houses. To amend and to improve the law in relation to homelessness, as well as making provisions for the standards of housing provided by local authorities. Furthermore, the Act also provided a definition of a Gypsy and Traveller, mandated an accommodation needs assessment and required LPAs to meet any identified need. The Act also abolished the housing revenue account subsidy, in addition to allowing mutual housing associations to grant assured tenancies.

The Active Travel (Wales) Act, 2013

The Active Travel (Wales) Act promotes safe routes for walking and cycling, as an alternative to private vehicles.

The Act plays its part in the design of developments, by encouraging links with existing routes to facilitate long-term changes in behaviours and mind-set. A requirement of the act is to map all active travel routes on an active travel network map and utilise this to deliver continued improvements in the quantum and quality of routes, to enhance connectivity.

Circular 005/2018 – Planning for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Sites, 2018

In June 2018, the Welsh Government published a new Circular entitled Planning for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Sites, which supersedes advice contained in Circulars 30/2007, 78/91 and 76/94.

The Circular updates the definition of a 'Gypsy and Traveller' to include Travelling Showpeople, alongside New Travellers where they are able to demonstrate a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in mobile homes. The Circular also takes into account the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, which sets out a framework for local authorities across Wales to ensure the 'sustainable development principle'.

Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales, 2019

The plan, published by the Welsh Government in 2019, aims to increase efficiency and cut carbon emissions of greenhouse gases by a minimum of 80% by 2050.

This is essential in order to meet the requirements of The Environment (Wales) Act, 2016 and to create fairer, greener and healthier communities. This plan is fundamental to reversing the effects of climate change.

REGIONAL:

City Deal (Cardiff Capital Region)

The £1.2billion Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal, was formally ratified in 2017. On the 12th February 2018, the CCR Regional Cabinet, comprising the ten local South East Wales authority leaders, approved the strategic business plan. This details how the £1.2 billion 'Wider Investment Fund' would be used up to 2023.

The plan specifies the regional strategic objectives of the CCR City Deal, which are: prosperity and opportunity; inclusion and equality; and identity, culture, community and sustainability. The City Deal also includes funding of £734million for the South Wales Metro, of which over £500m is provided by the Welsh Government, with £125m from the UK Government. Works on this project are well underway across the South East Wales region.

Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs)

The Welsh Government, in 2021, produced regulations that established four CJCs comprised of executive leaders of authorities.

One of the CJCs established comprises the CCR for the South East Wales region, which includes RCTCBC. The CJCs are responsible for preparing a Strategic Development Plan, preparing a Regional Transport Plan (RTP) and promoting the economic well-being of the area.

The South East Wales Metro

The Metro project has accounted for over half of the City Deal funding, with the project currently underway throughout the region.

Transport for Wales in partnership with the Welsh Government are responsible for the operation of the Metro railway service, whilst responsibility to bus and active travel provision remains with LPAs. The principal objective is to create an integrated, sustainable transport network throughout the region that is greener and more efficient.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan, 2023-2028

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board (PSB) comprises public bodies within Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend, who have come together to deliver services to local communities.

The PSB aim to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being, by creating targets to achieve the objectives of the seven Well-Being goals. The plan aims to create fairer access to opportunities for all communities, whilst recognising the variety of challenges faced by many and how this impacts upon their well-being.

NRW Area Statements – South Central Area Statement, 2020

NRW published seven area statements across Wales however Rhondda Cynon Taf is covered under the South Central Area Statement, published in 2020. Of the seven areas, South Central is the most densely populated, encompassing Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil.

The area also includes the moorland fringes of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, as well as the lowlands of the Vale of Glamorgan and the dramatic valleys uplands. Consequently, the Area Statement contains the objective to 'bridge the urban and natural environments'. The statement contains five key themes, which are: building resilient eco-systems; connecting people with nature; working with water; improving our health; and improving our air quality.

LOCAL EVIDENCE BASE:

Rhondda Cynon Taf Corporate Plan 'Making a difference', 2020-2024

RCTCBC's Corporate Plan covers the period 2020-2024 and contains the vision for the County Borough. This being **"For Rhondda Cynon Taf to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous."**

The purpose of the Council is to provide strong community leadership and create a healthy environment for people and businesses to prosper. To this end, the Council has three main priorities, which are set forth in within the plan:

1. **PEOPLE:** Are healthy, independent, and successful.
2. **PLACES:** Where people are proud to live, work and play.
3. **PROSPERITY:** Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.

Tackling Climate Change Rhondda Cynon Taf Climate Change Strategy, 2022 – 2025

The RCT Climate Change Strategy aims to meet the Council's commitments to reduce carbon emissions across the County Borough and in doing so, effectively tackle climate change.

It sets out that by 2030:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf will be carbon neutral;
- The whole County Borough will be as close as possible to carbon neutral; and
- Our work with partners will have ensured that all public and private organisations that operate in the County Borough will be carbon neutral by 2040.

Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government's ambition of a net zero in the public sector by 2030.

LDP Review Report, 2019 (Also acting as a synopsis of all AMRs)

The Council compiled a Review Report to inform the decision to begin the preparation of a Revised LDP. The Review Report provides a critical analysis of the evidence gathered since the adoption of the LDP via the monitoring process.

It considers factors such as the delivery of allocations and other development, alongside the performance and effectiveness of planning policy. The principal source of the review consists of the Council's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) that are sent to the Welsh Government annually. The AMRs monitor the performance and implementation of the plan, as well as considering any relevant contextual changes in global economic circumstances and newly published policy, guidance or legislation.

Settlement Hierarchy Assessment Paper, 2023

The Settlement Hierarchy, as determined by the Settlement Assessment, informs the Spatial Strategy of the RLDP and is utilised to ascertain which settlements are the most sustainable and have the capacity to deliver the requisite growth over the plan period.

LPAs are required to ensure that decisions on the location of development consider issues such as: sustainable growth patterns; supporting of services and facilities; the relationship between settlements; and the movement of people.

Retail and Commercial Centres Hierarchy Paper, 2023

Local Planning Authorities are required to identify a Retail and Commercial Centre Hierarchy for their Local Development Plans (LDPs). This paper sets out the relationship of the Retail and Commercial Centre Hierarchy with the Settlement Hierarchy and LDP Strategy.

Higher order settlements will typically have a large catchment area and range of uses, whilst lower order settlements are designated to meet the daily convenience needs of the communities that they serve.

Vision, Issues and Objectives Paper, 2023

The Vision, Issues and Objectives Paper was compiled in 2023 and outlines the key findings of the initial stage of the Revised LDP for RCT. The paper identifies the social, economic, environmental and broader issues that exist across the County Borough, specifically, those that the LDP can and should seek to address.

The issues of the RLDP have been condensed to produce a concise Vision for the plan. The Issues and Vision are considered to formulate defined Objectives for the RLDP, over the plan period. Consequently, the outcomes identified form the foundation of the RLDP and the preparation of subsequent stages.

Demographic Evidence Report, 2023

RCTCBC commissioned Edge Analytics to prepare a Demographic Evidence Report in 2022. The report uses POPGROUP technology to produce a range of growth scenarios for the County Borough, incorporating the Welsh Government population and household projections, in addition to demographic and economic statistics from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and StatsWales.

The analysis outlines the population and household change for each growth scenario, from 2022 to 2037, including new dwellings, average net migration and employment growth per annum.

Housing Supply Paper, 2023

The Housing Supply paper details the number of dwellings that are expected to be built from the current housing landbank (sites currently with permission or under construction) during the plan period.

Additionally, it estimates the number of windfall sites (both small and large), which may come forward by 2037. The report concludes with the identification of the scale of allocations that need to be made in order to meet the determined RLDP housing provision.

Local Housing Market Assessment Draft Findings 2024

The LHMA analyses the current unmet need for affordable housing in accordance with the most recent Welsh Government methods of calculation.

The assessment determines the future affordable housing need, across the housing market areas in RCT, in association with the determined population and household growth proposed by the RLDP.

The Urban Capacity Study, 2022

RCTCBC has compiled an Urban Capacity Study to ascertain the capacity of existing urban land to deliver future housing and other development within the County Borough. The desk based study sought to identify potential land for the Revised LDP, as well as provide an insight into the number of windfall developments likely to occur over the plan period (2022-2037).

Whilst the study estimates the potential for accommodating new dwellings, it cannot predict which sites may be delivered in the future. The study was contained to those sites within the defined settlement boundary, with all other land (e.g. open space, flood risk zones or sites with ecological value/interest) excluded.

Growth Options Paper, 2023

The Growth Options Paper details the proposed growth options for RCT. It details how the various scenarios proposed are influenced by and could potentially affect, the total population, demographics, dwellings requirements and tenures, as well as having implications for employment land and projected growth.

Within the paper, a number of scenarios have been tested and analysed to determine the most appropriate level of growth for the RLDP over the plan period 2022-2037.

Spatial Strategy Options Paper, 2023

The Spatial Strategy Options Paper has been prepared to set out the spatial strategy options for the Revised LDP. It seeks to reflect the key national, regional and local policies relevant to the formulation of the spatial strategy options.

In order to frame and adopt a suitable spatial strategy, it is necessary to look at a number of alternative approaches or options, where the requisite levels of growth can be accommodated. These options must be realistic and seek to address the objectives of the RLDP. This should ultimately be a significant factor in the determination of the RLDP's wider Strategy, ensuring that the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP can be achieved.

Empty Homes Strategy, 2022-2025

The Empty Homes Strategy provides a framework for bringing empty homes back into beneficial use in RCT. It was felt necessary to produce a bespoke strategy for RCT, due to the high numbers of empty homes across the County Borough, where there is continuing pressure to deliver affordable housing.

It is however noted that these dwellings cannot be considered in the same manner as 'new' dwellings, in terms of contributing to the overall housing need, identified in the RLDP.

Employment Land Review, 2023

In 2022, the Council commissioned the BE Group, in conjunction with PER Consulting, to produce an Employment Land Review (ELR) for the County Borough. The ELR includes an economic development evidence base for the County Borough and the 'larger than local' area (across LPA boundaries), as well as assessing the policy context.

Moreover, it contains the three elements of the ELR itself: the property market assessment, the audit of existing employment sites and the calculation of future land requirements. In terms of land requirement, the 2015 employment guidance sets out two methodologies for determining this figure, both of which were used within RCTCBC's ELR.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Tourism Strategy

The RCT Tourism Strategy sets out a vision for RCT as the premier destination in the UK for "experience" based visits and vacations showcasing our first-class landscape, culture, and heritage.

In order to achieve this, the strategy sets out goals to ensure that RCT: is at the cutting edge of adventure tourism; is the premier destination for those seeking an active lifestyle; and maximises the benefits of its outstanding landscapes. Furthermore, the strategy seeks to utilise the culture and heritage of RCT to the full, thus benefitting residents and tourists, in addition to creating a first class visitor experience. This will include over-night accommodation that is not just a place to stay but an experience in its own right.

Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment (SFCA), 2022

The SFCA, produced by JBA Consulting in November 2022, seeks to provide robust evidence to inform policy development and decisions on land-use allocations. The study has had due regard to national planning policy and guidance, as well as the relevant Technical Advice Note, this being TAN 15 entitled Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion.

The aims of the study include:

- Informing potential development opportunities, having due regard to flood risk management;
- Identifying the extent and severity of flood risk within the County Borough to ensure that development is steered away from those areas; and
- To provide a reference document that can be relied upon for initial advice and guidance.

Draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)

An LFRMS has been produced by RCT, which includes a strategy and action plan. This details the objectives, measures and actions that have been developed to outline, at a high level, how RCT intends to manage local flood risk. It also sets out how to adopt a holistic approach to flood risk management.

This is the second Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, replacing the first strategy, which was published in 2013.

Candidate Site Register (Findings of the Stage 1 Assessment), 2023

In accordance with the LDP Regulations, RCTCBC must prepare a Candidate Site Register (CSR), which should be published at the Preferred Strategy stage.

This includes all sites received during the Call for Candidate Sites process and the results of their first stage assessments, in line with the Candidate Site Methodology.

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal - Ongoing process

In May 2022, RCTCBC commissioned LUC to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Revised LDP. The Development Plans Manual (Ed. 3) recommends that the SA/SEA also incorporate other assessments, such as Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Welsh Language Assessment.

It should also address the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015 and The Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Consequently, the process is referred to as an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA).

The purpose of the Scoping Report produced by LUC is to provide the initial context for the scope of the ISA of the RLDP. There will then be statutory ISA Reports for each of the official stages and other elements of the RLDP.

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) - Ongoing process

In addition to the ISA, LUC are also undertaking work on the HRA on behalf of RCTCBC. The HRA provides an assessment of the potential harm and impact that a proposed plan could have on specially protected sites.

RCT has a number of sites considered to be of special wildlife or conservational importance, which are protected by International law. When compiling the RLDP, RCTCBC must be very aware of any development proposals, within the vicinity of such sites, to ensure that they are protected from harm.

Viability Report

In 2022, RCT commissioned Avison Young to undertake a viability assessment of residential development across the County Borough. This will assist the Council in assessing the general viability throughout RCT, as well as the barriers to successfully bringing forward suitable Candidate Sites.

It will also give an indication of where the provision of affordable housing can realistically be anticipated. The study was based on the current LDP policy requirements.

Draft Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), 2022

The Draft GTAA, produced in February 2022 by Opinion Research Services, assessed the need for future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in RCT. The principal objective is to provide a robust assessment of existing and future needs for accommodation in the short-term and over the life of the Revised LDP (2022-2037).

The accommodation needs have been compiled through a combination of desk-based research, stakeholder engagement and engagement with members of the Travelling Communities. The study concludes that RCT will need to meet the needs of the existing and projected Gypsy and Traveller population via the Revised LDP.

Summary of the Draft Spatial Strategy Options Paper and Consideration for Transport Modelling, 2023

This paper is the result of modelling work undertaken to determine the additional trips created when considered against various options of spatial growth in RCT.

This also indicates where this additional travel would take place.

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIES:

Porth Town Centre Strategy, 2018/2019:

The strategy seeks to enable a vibrant and enticing town, with a strong offer, which recognises the centre as the heart of our communities. In order to achieve this and to address the significant challenges faced by commercial and retail centres generally; the strategy sets out an integrated and holistic approach to regeneration.

This approach takes note of the distinctive role that Porth plays and its important location for services, transport, employment and housing delivery. In order to deliver the strategy, the Council aims to harness any opportunities presented from funding streams, such as the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, 2023/2024:

The strategy recognises that in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Aberdare faces significant challenges, despite remaining the heart of its surrounding communities.

The Council is committed, via the strategy and its Corporate Plan (Making a Difference, 2020-2024), to create vibrant, thriving places where people wish to live, work and socialise. Achieving the aims of the strategy will be contingent upon partnership working to harness the collective energy to implement the requisite interventions.

The strategy sets forth a framework to guide investment, whilst taking account of its role and functions, in supporting local communities via the provision of services and facilities, regional transport connections, employment opportunities, housing and retail, leisure and cultural experiences. It seeks to capitalise on the surrounding new strategic infrastructure and the Metro to provide additional opportunities and encourage further investment.

Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan, 2022:

The plan outlines the proposed regeneration of Pontypridd, building on shared aspirations for the town and its role within the Cardiff Capital Region. The plan identifies several core ambitions that will guide future investment to the town, alongside design drivers to ensure that new development meets these ambitions.

The ambitions create a vision for Pontypridd: as a business destination; as a great place to live, as a place that is connected and accessible, as a green waterside town; as a unique townscape; as a cultural and social destination; and as an inclusive and resilient town.

The design drivers set in place to achieve these objectives will focus on development, connectivity, townscape, green infrastructure and the public realm, whilst building upon the social and cultural aspects of the town. Furthermore, there are five spatial areas within the town, which will be the focus of targeted investment, these being: The Southern Gateway, Town Centre Core, Market Quarter, Northern Gateway and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

3 ISSUES

Introduction

3.1.1 An initial stage of the Revision of the LDP is to identify key issues, challenges and drivers facing RCT.

3.1.2 The identification of these for the RLDP was achieved through multiple stages and wide-reaching public engagement, consultation with the LDP Forum, the Housing Stakeholder group, the RCT Members Steering group and the Council's internal officer working group.

3.1.3 The integrated sustainability appraisal (ISA) also reconsidered the issues that were set out in the current LDP and reviewed these to see which were still relevant. Baseline data and evidence was interrogated to ascertain which issues from the current plan were still relevant whilst also to establish if there were any new issues which have arisen.

3.1.4 These Issues set out early in the plan making process what the RLDP should address. They then form the foundation for the preparation of the following stages of the Vision, Objectives, Preferred Strategy and its Strategic Policies.

3.1.5 The Issues, and how they were gathered, are listed in full in the Vision, Issues and Objectives paper (2023). A summary of the key Issues, including the challenges and drivers, is provided below, and are grouped into what is considered the most appropriate topic areas:

HOUSING ISSUES:

01. Housing for all:
More affordable and private market housing is needed in RCT.

02. Mix of housing for all:
There is a need for a diverse range of housing sizes and types to be developed for all members of society, all ages and their individual needs.

03. Sustainable buildings:
More houses should be built with consideration of carbon neutral and carbon zero standards.

04. Design of housing developments:
New housing development should continue to improve their design for more cohesive future communities.

05. Viability of housing:
Financial viability to enable significant market led housing development is an issue in the north of RCT in particular. Delivery of new housing has not been as balanced as it should across all areas of RCT over recent years.

06. Location of housing:
Development should come forward in sustainable locations, on brownfield sites in the settlement boundary where possible.

07. Housing and transport:
There are some communities that have less access to active travel, public transport and highways infrastructure than others.

08. Quality of housing:
A large proportion of the housing stock in RCT is older, and investment in its upkeep should be continued.

09. Empty properties:
There are empty houses/properties across RCT that should be brought back into beneficial use.

10. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO):
High numbers of HMO that exist in some communities should be appropriately managed.

11. Housing and Welsh language:
Housing development should support the Welsh language and not be a detriment to it.

12. Gypsy and Traveller Community;
There is a need to provide appropriate and sufficient housing for the Gypsy and Traveller community.

ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT ISSUES:

13. Employment:
Some parts of the County Borough have higher levels of deprivation and unemployment.

14. Increase employment:
More employment is needed in RCT to keep improving and strengthening the economy.

15. Location of employment:
There is an imbalance in the scale of employment across RCT, particularly north to south and therefore employment throughout RCT is not as easily accessible to all.

ECONOMY & **EMPLOYMENT ISSUES** (CONTINUED)**:**

16. **Diversification:**
    More diversity and modernisation in the employment market would be welcomed.

17. **Employment estates:**
    The building stock in some of the employment and industrial estates would benefit from modernisation or redevelopment.

18. **Employment and town centres:**
    More employment opportunities are needed in town centres.

19. **Education:**
    There are areas within RCT that have lower than national average levels of education attainment.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES:

20. **Reducing the need to travel:**
    There is a need to reduce the need to travel, particularly through the location of new development.

21. **Public Transport:**
    Some communities and areas in RCT are not as well served by public transport and active travel facilities as others. This may be type, frequency or integration between modes. These facilities should be encouraged and continue to be improved for all.

22. **Metro:**
    The South Wales Metro is welcomed and should be supported through appropriate location of future development.

23. **Congestion and roads:**
    There are areas of traffic congestion during peak times around RCT and should be addressed where possible.

24. **Connectivity and integration:**
    There is generally less good transport connectivity between some areas within RCT, particularly when travelling east to west.

25. **Electric Vehicles:**
    There is not enough electric vehicle charging infrastructure in RCT.

HEALTH & WELLBEING ISSUES:

26. **Physical and mental health and wellbeing:**
    When considered against national indicators, there are some poor levels of physical and mental health in RCT, and this worse in some areas than others.

27. **Healthcare provision:**
    Primary healthcare provision needs to meet the demands of the growing population.

28. **Air quality and pollution:**
    Some small areas of RCT have pockets of poor air quality.

29. **Access to open/green space, outdoors and physical activity:**
    Some parts of RCT have less accessible open and green spaces than others.

30. **Crime and safety:**
    As with all areas, RCT has issues with crime, and where possible, developments should seek to design out potential for crime.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ISSUES:

31. Green Infrastructure, green and open spaces:
There is a need to protect, enhance and provide further green and blue infrastructure. More good quality, accessible open and green spaces in RCT is needed in places.

32. Ecology and biodiversity:
There is a need to protect and enhance biodiversity features and natural assets, particularly in line with the nature emergency that has been declared at the national level.

33. Landscape:
Sensitive landscapes across RCT should continue to be protected and also give consideration to the Brecon Beacons National Park.

CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES:

34. Renewable energy:
Further sustainable and appropriate renewable energy development schemes are needed.

35. Flooding:
Flooding and its impacts must continue to be managed in RCT.

36. Green Infrastructure and carbon storage:
There is a need to preserve and enhance green infrastructure and all suitable natural assets that can help to address climate change.

37. Sustainable/ Carbon neutral design:
Developments should be designed in a more sustainable and carbon considerate way.

38. Wildfires:
Managing wildfire risk is important for safety, the environment and for health and well-being

WASTE ISSUES

39. Recycling and reuse:
There is a need to continue to encourage and improve positive recycling rates and reduce the generation of all waste.

40. Waste collection:
There is a need to ensure developments are designed with waste collections in mind.

41. Circular economy:
More consideration and support is needed for the circular economy.

42. Fly tipping:
Fly tipping is an issue in RCT. There is a need to ensure physical and chemical protection of the natural environment.

MINERALS ISSUES

43. Extraction:
There should not be more coal extraction in RCT.

44. Quarry aggregate extraction in RCT should be appropriate and necessary.

45. Mining legacy:
There is a need to address the mining legacy and its impacts.

CULTURE, HERITAGE & WELSH LANGUAGE ISSUES

46. Listed Buildings, conservation, and heritage:
Listed buildings, conservation areas and heritage assets should be preserved and enhanced for multiple benefits.

47. Welsh language:
There is a need to protect, support and encourage the Welsh language

48. Education:
Improvement of educational attainment must be continued.

49. Education:
School capacity must continue to grow to meet the growing need in some areas of RCT.

50. The Arts:
The Arts should be further supported.

51. Community activities:
There is a need to improve community cohesion and create strong communities.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES:

52. Health:
Primary healthcare provision needs to meet the demands of the growing population.

53. Access to Services and facilities:
There are some communities that have less accessible services and facilities than others, which should be taken into account when proposing new housing.

TOURISM & LEISURE ISSUES:

54. Tourism:
There is a need to build on recent tourism successes in RCT, to further help support the economy.

55. Tourist accommodation:
Further suitable accommodation is needed for growth in the Tourism sector.

56. Promotion of Tourism and extended visits:
Ways should be sought to encourage visitors to stay longer in RCT. This may include promotion of our cultural, heritage and natural assets.

57. Promotion and support of businesses:
More promotion and support for tourism and its businesses in RCT is welcomed.

58. Leisure facilities:
leisure uses and facilities need to continue to be supported.

TOWN CENTRES AND RETAIL ISSUES

59. Town centres:
The role of town centres needs to change. The mix of uses needs to change and a flexible approach needs to be taken for future prosperity.

60. Housing in Town Centres:
Housing in town centres should be supported although it needs to be appropriate and suitable.

61. Investment in town centres:
continued investment in town centres is needed to maintain future viability.

COAL MINING LEGACY ISSUES

62. Tip safety:
there is a need to address tip safety.

63. Reclamation:
The barriers to reclamation need to be addressed.

64. Ecology and biodiversity:
The high ecology and biodiversity value of mining legacy sites needs to be recognised and effectively considered and integrated into development proposals, tip safety and management delivery.

4 THE VISION & OBJECTIVES

Introduction

4.1.1 A Vision and a set of supporting Objectives have been formulated for the RLDP to ensure that the plan addresses the key Issues that have been identified. It sets out the purpose of the plan and how it is intended that RCT will change and develop over the plan period to 2037. The Vision and Objectives are interlinked and should be considered together.

4.1.2 The Vision accords with relevant national, regional and local strategies and policies. The Council's Corporate Plan and Well-being Plan have directly informed the Vision of the RLDP, alongside the Issues identified. This is to ensure that there is synergy and consistency between all three documents, which are striving for the same overall outcome for RCT.

4.1.3 The consistent themes that have emerged from the above include climate change, health, cohesive communities and the importance of the environment and green space. The Vision has been formulated on this basis.

4.1.4 Rhondda Cynon Taf is a very distinctive place with a rich history, culture, important wildlife, beautiful landscapes and friendly communities. What is also distinctive about RCT is the differences between places. The previous LDP started the work of recognising and addressing these differences, and building on the strengths. This RLDP will continue this good work and build on the successes it has seen.

Vision

4.1.5   The Vision by 2037 is for a more resilient and sustainable RCT:

- ● **An area of sustainable, cohesive communities who are healthy, well connected and who have equal access to high quality homes, jobs, services and facilities.**

- ● **An area more resilient and considerate to the challenges of climate change with protected and enhanced biodiversity and green spaces and a well-connected sustainable transport system.**

- ● **An area with a diverse and healthy economy, supported by vibrant and viable town centres and a flourishing tourism sector. An RCT that celebrates its heritage and is resilient for the future.**

4.1.6   The Vision will be delivered through the Plan's Objectives, which are set out in the next section.

RLDP Objectives

4.1.7   Clear Objectives need to be prepared at the outset of the Revised LDP. They set out in detail the wider intentions of the Vision of the RLDP. These Objectives will be monitored throughout the plan period, which will ultimately indicate if the RLDP has been delivered successfully.

4.1.8   Objectives have been formulated from the Vision and heavily informed by the breadth of Issues that are shown in the previous section. Further detail of how the Issues and Vision have informed the preparation of the Objectives can be seen in the **Vision, Issues and Objectives Paper.**

4.1.9   Further, specific Objectives were identified for the Integrated Sustainable Appraisal process, which also reflect national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans, including the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well Being Plan.

4.1.10   It has been determined that the 15 ISA Objectives identified are fully appropriate to be taken forward as overall RLDP Objectives, as they fully align with our Vision and identified Issues. There are then a further 3 Objectives identified that would not be part of the ISA process, that are considered necessary for the RLDP to achieve.

4.1.11   Therefore, in order to support the delivery of the RLDP and its Vision, 18 specific Objectives have been identified and are listed below.

4.1.12   Under each specific objective, associated aims have been included to provide some information on the kinds of areas within the topic, which could be used to form the basis of detailed policies, as the plan preparation moves forward to the deposit draft.

1 OBJECTIVE 1:
Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce flood risk

Associated aims and objectives:

- To support the increase in electric vehicle infrastructure.

- Locate development in sustainable locations.

- Ensure that employment locations are accessible to all.

- To protect, enhance and improve access to areas of good quality greenspace and open space in RCT.

- Protect, enhance and provide further green and blue infrastructure assets and networks for their multi-functional roles.

- Continue to manage our natural assets in RCT in a more cohesive way, seeking to also identify multifaceted benefits from this.

- Increase the production and supply of renewable energy and where possible reduce carbon generating energy consumption.

- To reduce the impacts of flooding and ensure development and communities are not put at risk of flooding.

- Continue to identify, manage, protect and enhance green infrastructure and other natural assets, seeking to identify benefits such as helping to address climate change.

- To promote and where appropriate require sustainable/carbon net zero design throughout RCT.

- Conserve and enhance our biodiversity rich landscapes to maximise habitat and species resilience to future climate change.

2 OBJECTIVE 2:
Provide an appropriate amount and mix of housing to meet local needs

Associated aims and objectives:

- To provide diversity in the housing market through the delivery of a range of house types and sizes catering for the needs of all communities in RCT.

- Increase the amount of good quality housing that is affordable across both social and private markets.

- To provide viable housing sites in RCT and to encourage the delivery of brownfield development.

- Reduce the amount of empty properties in RCT and bring them back into use for several beneficial reasons.

- Increase the amount of new housing that is built to a sustainable/carbon net zero •Appropriately manage Houses in Multiple Occupation and their impacts.

- To achieve a high standard of design and placemaking in developments.

- To seek to identify suitable sites for new housing development in all parts of RCT to allow for housing need and opportunities for all.

- Provide for the housing needs of an aging population in both new build and within existing housing stock.

- To provide high-quality homes.

- The need to provide appropriate and sufficient housing for Gypsy and Traveller communities.

3 OBJECTIVE 3:
Promote vibrant communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all

Associated aims and objectives:

- To provide appropriate, accessible, and adequate services and facilities to existing and growing communities of RCT.

- Promote integrated communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all.

- Identify a suitable hierarchy of all retail centres, which provides services and facilities at a regional, local and neighbourhood level.

- Seek to support education and training in RCT where possible.

- To achieve high quality new and redeveloped employment sites.

- Improve infrastructure in RCT and reduce congestion.

- Improve the levels of education and training in RCT.

- Ensure there are sufficient school places where populations and school place demand is evolving, particularly where new development occurs.

- To achieve a high standard of design for all developments and their occupiers.

4 OBJECTIVE 4:
Encourage healthy and safe lifestyles that promote well-being and improve overall health levels in RCT

Associated aims and objectives:

- Support the provision of sufficient healthcare and facilities, with access to them.

- To protect, enhance and improve access to areas of good quality greenspace and open space in RCT. This can contribute to improved physical and mental health and well-being of residents across RCT.

- Seek opportunities to tackle crime through planning in RCT, to ensure that people living, working and visiting feel safe.

- Protect, enhance and provide further green and blue infrastructure assets and networks for their multi-functional roles.

- Continue to manage, protect and enhance green infrastructure and other natural assets, seeking to identify benefits such as enhancing nature and helping to address climate change.

5 OBJECTIVE 5:
Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport

Associated aims and objectives:

- To locate development in sustainable locations that have good access to a range of sustainable modes of transport.

- Improve the public/sustainable transport network in terms of quality, location and cost.

- To improve the frequency of public transport and the connectivity of different modes to allow a more holistic public transport network.

- Support the objectives and delivery of the South Wales Metro.

- Improve the connectivity of public transport in RCT between different areas and different modes.

- Improve the active travel network and encourage its use for all.

6 OBJECTIVE 6:
Promote, protect and enhance cultural heritage and the built environment.

Associated aims and objectives:

- To protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment (listed buildings, conservation areas and heritage assets) as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations.

- Seek to develop opportunities to extend the heritage-based tourism industry in RCT.

- Support the arts culture and associated heritage of RCT.

7 OBJECTIVE 7:
Promote the use of the Welsh language

Associated aims and objectives:

- To support a thriving Welsh language in association with the identification of locations of development.

- Support and establish the conditions in RCT, which allow the Welsh language to thrive.

8 OBJECTIVE 8:
Protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape

Associated aims and objectives:

- To protect and enhance our unique landscapes that may be sensitive to development pressures.

9 OBJECTIVE 9:
Protect and enhance biodiversity

Associated aims and objectives:

- To protect and enhance biodiversity and ecological features from inappropriate development and its associated effects.

- Recognise the ecology and biodiversity in areas of mining legacy.

- Recognise the unique role the rich resource of semi-natural habitat and species diversity in RCT provides as assets for the well-being of RCT residents.

- Actively recognise, manage and conserve the unique ecology and biodiversity of our mining legacy, effectively integrating this with tip safety and maintenance requirements.

10 OBJECTIVE 10:
Protect the quality and quantity of RCT's water resources

Associated aims and objectives:

- Protect, enhance and provide further green and blue infrastructure assets and networks for their multi-functional roles.

- Improve the water environment and seek to address the negative effects upon it.

11 OBJECTIVE 11:
Protect and enhance air quality and ensure appropriate soundscapes

Associated aims and objectives:

- Seek to improve air quality across the County Borough.

- Seek to improve soundscapes across the County Borough.

12 OBJECTIVE 12:
Promote the efficient use of land, soils and minerals

Associated aims and objectives:

- Encourage the delivery of brownfield development.

- Better manage our natural assets in RCT in a more cohesive way, which identifies and delivers multifaceted, but mutually supporting benefits.

- Ensure all quarry extraction is appropriate, necessary and in accordance with all standards and conditions.

- Promote the efficient and appropriate use of minerals, including the safeguarding of resources and ensuring that adequate reserves are allocated to meet local, regional and national needs.

- Encourage the recycling and re-use of aggregates and building materials, where possible.

13 OBJECTIVE 13:
Continue to minimise waste generation and promote more sustainable waste management

Associated aims and objectives:

- Continue to encourage, support and improve recycling in RCT, whilst supporting the overall reduction of waste.

- Ensure that new housing estate of all sizes are appropriately designed to allow for larger vehicles to access them, particularly for the collection of waste.

- Ensure that all residual waste that cannot be recycled is disposed of in a sustainable manner that does not create any pollution.

- Support the circular economy to ensure that built assets, materials, products and components are re-used and remain in use for as long as possible.

14 OBJECTIVE 14:
Provide for a sustainable economy

Associated aims and objectives:

- To decrease the levels of deprivation in RCT and to seek to support employment opportunities.

- Address the impact of the coronavirus in RCT.

- To provide for a sustainable economy.

- Seek to develop opportunities to extend the heritage-based tourism industry in RCT.

15 OBJECTIVE 15:
Provide for a diverse range of job opportunities

Associated aims and objectives:

- To support existing employment sites across RCT and seek to regenerate the older and derelict stock on sites. To allocate new employment opportunities in appropriate locations.

- Provide a diverse range of job opportunities.

- Increase the amount of job opportunities in RCT.

- Increase the amount of employment opportunities in town centre locations.

16 ▸ OBJECTIVE 16:
Promote vibrant, adaptable & resilient Town Centres

Associated aims and objectives:

- Support and encourage an appropriate changing role and diversification of the town or commercial centres and provide the flexibility for them to adapt to change.

- Provide appropriate housing in town centre locations at the right scale that should increase the vitality of the town centres.

- Continue to provide sufficient and appropriate infrastructure in town centres, including the linking of all transport, public transport and active travel modes

- To create an appropriate retail hierarchy, which provides services and facilities at a regional, local and neighbourhood level.

- To increase the amount of employment opportunities in town centre locations.

17 ▸ OBJECTIVE 17:
Address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT

Associated aims and objectives:

- Appropriately address the risk associated with tips from coal and other mining.

- Seek to identify options to redevelop brownfield sites that are affected by our mining legacy, both on and below the ground.

- Ensure there is appropriate reclamation of mining legacy sites.

- Recognise the ecology and biodiversity in areas of mining legacy.

18 ▸ OBJECTIVE 18:
To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector

Associated aims and objectives:

- To help support the provision of suitable accommodation for the tourism sector.

- To support the growth of tourism and associated opportunities in RCT.

- To support the growth of eco/green tourism in RCT.

- To improve tourism facilities and associated infrastructure and accessibility for everyone.

- To support the leisure sector and it's evolving needs and development.

5 THE SETTLEMENT ASSESSMENT & SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

Introduction

5.1.1 A key part of the RLDP process is to undertake a Settlement Assessment that informs the identification of a Settlement Hierarchy. This should ensure that decisions on the location of development in the RLDP consider issues such as sustainable growth patterns, supporting of services and facilities, and the relationship between the scale of settlements and how they are used by people.

5.1.2 RCTCBC has undertaken this process to determine if the current hierarchy is still correct. This is set out in greater detail in the **Settlement Assessment and Settlement Hierarchy Paper**. The assessment was based on the current LDP Settlement Hierarchy at the outset.

5.1.3 The agreed regional methodology for undertaking Settlement Assessments was utilised in the first instance; although as the paper sets out, appropriate, additional considerations were made. Both qualitative and quantitative assessment took place, including a very comprehensive analysis of all settlements. Settlements were assessed to ascertain the relationship between them, their sustainability credentials, the level and proximity of services and facilities present, population size, distance to and frequency of public transport links and the percentage of Welsh speakers present. This was ultimately to determine their ability and capacity to accommodate further development.

The Revised LDP Settlement Hierarchy

5.1.4   The outcomes of the Settlement Assessment indicated the need for a small number of amendments to the current LDP Settlement Hierarchy.

5.1.5   Firstly, to make a more clear distinction with the closely associated Retail Hierarchy, 'Principal Towns' are now referred to as 'Principal Settlements.'

5.1.6   Secondly, Pontyclun is indicated as a smaller settlement in the current LDP, (although it was within the Principal Town of Llantrisant/Talbot Green in earlier iterations of the current LDP preparation). However, the Settlement Assessment concluded that Pontyclun now forms part of what is now a Principal Settlement, given the clear interdependent, social, economic and geographical relationships between these places. From this point forward, this Principal Settlement is referred to as 'Talbot Green, Pontyclun and Llantrisant'. The housing and employment areas throughout are considered to be indivisible, in the context of the larger settlement. Residents of Talbot Green, Pontyclun and Llantrisant rely on the commercial and public transport opportunities throughout the settlement, which are interconnected.

5.1.7   Further, the village of Llwydcoed is now considered to be a smaller settlement, being slightly more detached than those places that comprise the Principal Settlement of Aberdare (these being Aberdare, Aberaman, Abernant, Trecynon and Cwmdare). Llwydcoed is more akin to the Cwmbach and Abercwmboi/Cwmaman settlements, as although they retain an inter-dependent relationship with Aberdare, they are further removed and more independent.

5.1.8   All other settlements within the Hierarchy have remained the same therefore the Settlement Hierarchy for the County Borough is as follows:

> ### Principal Settlements
> - **Aberdare**
> - **Talbot Green, Pontyclun and Llantrisant**
> - **Pontypridd**

5.1.9   The Principal Settlements will remain the primary, important hubs and gateways for new investment, innovation and sustainable development. This is at an RCT and regional level. The Principal Settlements have significant public transport links and active travel routes, which facilitate movement around the County Borough and the wider region.

> ### Key Settlements
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | **Ferndale** | **Porth** |
> | **Hirwaun** | **Tonypandy** |
> | **Llanharan** | **Tonyrefail** |
> | **Mountain Ash** | **Treorchy** |

5.1.10 Key Settlements are geographically smaller and less strategically significant than the Principal Settlements. Nonetheless, these settlements are extremely important, acting as centres for commercial and community activities and sustainable development and investment. Furthermore, the majority of Key Settlements have the requisite public transport facilities to support growth.

Smaller Settlements

- Aberaman South
- Abercynon
- Beddau
- Church Village
- Cilfynydd
- Cwmbach
- Cymmer
- Efail Isaf
- Gilfach Goch
- Glyncoch
- Hawthorn
- Llanharry
- Llanilltud Faerdref
- Llwydcoed
- Maerdy
- Penrhiwceiber
- Pentre
- Penywaun
- Rhigos
- Rhydyfelin
- Taffs Well
- Tonteg
- Treherbert
- Tylorstown
- Ynyshir
- Ynysybwl
- Ystrad

5.1.11 As with the Principal Settlements and Key Settlements, Smaller Settlements are sustainably located with the services and public transport links to support development. The Smaller Settlements will play an important role in delivering the Strategy by supporting the vitality of the higher order settlements and accommodating levels of growth. They will help meet the needs of local communities, retaining and expanding the provision of services and facilities.

Settlements Outside Settlement Boundaries

Name	Location	Type
North View Terrace	Aberaman	2
Goitre Coed Isaf	Abercynon	2
Gelynog Court	Beddau	1
Blaencwm	Blaencwm	1
Coedely	Coedely	1
Bwllfadare Terrace	Cwmdare	2
Heol Creigiau	Efail Isaf	1
Groesfaen	Groesfaen	1
Halt Road	Hirwaun	2
Seymour Avenue	Llanharan	2
Meiros Valley	Llanharan	1
Trem-y-Fforest	Llanharry	2
Degar	Llanharry	1

Settlements Outside Settlement Boundaries (continued)		
Name	**Location**	**Type**
● **Gwaun Llanhari**	Llanharry	1
● **Castell-y-Mwnws**	Llanharry	1
● **Mwyndy**	Llantrisant	1
● **Greys Place**	Llwydcoed	2
● **Pantaquesta**	Miskin	1
● **Highlands**	Penycoedcae	1
● **Penycoedcae**	Penycoedcae	1
● **Cefn Rhigos**	Rhigos	1
● **Rhiwsaeson**	Rhiwsaeson	1
● **Talygarn**	Talygarn	1
● **Talygarn House**	Talygarn	1
● **Pantybrad**	Tonyrefail	1
● **Tylacoch Place**	Treorchy	2
● **Ynysmaerdy**	Ynysmaerdy	1
● **Pleasant View**	Ynysybwl	2
● **Daren Ddu**	Ynysybwl	1

5.1.12   The Settlement Hierarchy also acknowledges that there are twenty-nine settlements of ten or more dwellings outside the defined settlement boundary. In accordance with national planning policy, these settlements are not suited to further development because they are in unsustainable locations and would not meet the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes.

● **Settlement Type 1: Dwelling cluster**

● **Settlement Type 2: Terrace or street**

5.1.13   It should also be noted that the overall Settlement Hierarchy is integrally linked to the Retail and Commercial Centre Hierarchy. That has been identified within a strategic policy later in the Preferred Strategy. However, it should be noted that from this point forward in the RLDP, what has been referred to as the Retail and Commercial Centres (and the background hierarchy paper) is now known simply as the 'Settlement Centres' i.e. the centres of the settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy.

GROWTH OPTIONS

Introduction

6.1.1 A fundamental part of the preparation the Revised LDP is to establish the most suitable level of growth for the plan to deliver. This is determined by a multitude of social, economic and demographic evidence, needs and aspirations. Primarily, this is related to the scale of housing which should be delivered in the RLDP. However, this is also intrinsically linked to the economy of RCT, in terms of employment growth and seeking to ensure a balanced future demographic in the County Borough, for its continued prosperity.

6.1.2 'Edge Analytics' have prepared a **Demographic Evidence** report for RCT. It sets out a detailed demographic and employment profile for the County Borough. It then configures a range of growth scenarios, both demographic and employment based. It concludes with an associated range of dwelling and employment growth outcomes for each of these scenarios from 2022 to 2037.

6.1.3 The **Growth Options Paper** follows on from this, setting out our analysis of these growth scenarios to determine what is most suitable for the Revised LDP, against a raft of relevant evidence and considerations.

6.1.4 Other such evidence that has informed this process includes:

- **LDP Review Report**
- **Welsh Government 2018 Household and Population Projections**
- **Office for National Statistics and Stats Wales**
- **Housing Supply Paper**
- **Candidate Site Assessments**
- **The Urban Capacity Study**
- **Local Housing Market Assessment**

Growth Scenarios

Scenarios that showed similar outcomes were grouped for their analysis, as follows:

MID-RANGE GROWTH SCENARIOS:

6.1.5 **The first of the mid-range growth scenarios is based on the Welsh Government (WG) 2018 Principal Population Projections. The second is the Dwelling-led 5 year scenario. The WG-2018 option is considered to be the main (or 'central') projection, and its forecasts are based on assumptions such as mortality, migration, household composition, and future fertility, which are considered most reflective of demographic patterns at the time of publication. The Dwelling-led 5 year option has formulated projections utilising RCT's average annual housing completion rate of 509 dwellings per annum (2016/17 – 2020/21).**

6.1.6 These projections have been translated to new housing requirements of 8,450 and 7,635 across the Revised LDP plan period, or 564 and 509 dwellings to be built per annum, respectively. The associated expected annual employment growth would be 266 and 187 jobs respectively.

Name of Projection Scenario	Summary	Total population change 2022-37 (% change)	Total households change 2022-37 (% change)	Total Dwellings (Dwellings per year)	Employment Growth per year
WG-2018	Principal Population Projections based on fertility, mortality, migration and household composition assumptions.	8,020 (3.3%)	8,009 (7.5%)	8,450 (564)	266
Dwelling - led 5Y	Models on an average annual dwelling growth equal to RCT's average annual housing completion rate 2016/17 – 2020/21.	6,406 (2.7%)	7,234 (6.8%)	7,635 (509)	187

6.1.7 Overall, the two mid-ranged growth scenarios are supported by the most substantial evidence. These scenarios each present realistically achievable growth scenarios, and the dwelling and job growth projected by these scenarios are reflective of RCT's position within the National Growth Area of Cardiff, Newport and The Valleys. The mid-ranged growth options have the benefit of providing a balance to delivering an ambitious but achievable amount of much needed private and affordable housing in sustainable locations, while minimising potential environmental impacts. Both of these scenarios are very positive and aspirational targets that could resolve multiple objectives of the revised LDP.

HIGHER GROWTH SCENARIOS:

6.1.8 **Two further scenarios have been considered that have higher levels of growth. The first follows the Welsh Government's 2018 High Population Projections and is based on high assumptions of fertility, mortality and migration compared to the principal projection. The second, PG (Pop Group company software) 5 Year scenario, calibrates population/household projections based on migration patterns of the last 5 years.**

6.1.9 The new housing requirements of these scenarios are 721 and 682 per annum, and the annual employment growth would be 343 and 355 jobs respectively.

Name of Projection Scenario	Summary	Total population change 2022-37 (% change)	Total households change 2022-37 (% change)	Total Dwellings (Dwellings per year)	Employment Growth per year
Higher Variant	Based on higher assumptions of fertility, life expectancy and migration compared to the Principal Population Projections.	13,490 (5.6%)	10,238 (9.5%)	10,815 (721)	343
PG-5Y	Calibrates migration assumptions using ONS data for Mid-year Population Estimates over the last 5 years (2015/16 – 2019/20)	12,135 (5.0%)	9,686 (9.0%)	10,230 (682)	355

6.1.10 These higher growth options would further accord with the aspirations of the national growth areas; increase the working age population and deliver greater numbers of affordable housing and jobs. However, there remains notable uncertainty and limited evidence that the dwelling requirements could realistically be achieved or delivered in RCT within the plan period to 2037. This would require far greater than average past build rates and expected market demand (indeed, the current LDP was perhaps too aspirational in this respect). Availability of greater amounts of suitable new land for allocation would prove a challenge. Overall, the higher growth options are considered a high-risk strategy, with perhaps unrealistic requirements and aspirations.

LOW GROWTH SCENARIOS :

6.1.11 **The third set of growth scenarios include the WG-2018-Low Population scenario. In contrast to the 'higher' variant, the lower variant is based on low assumptions of fertility, mortality and migration, compared to the Principal Projection. The PG-Long Term scenario is then based on migration assumptions reflective of ONS Mid-year Population Estimates from 2001-2020 (19 years).**

6.1.12 The new housing requirements of these scenarios are 353 and 382 per annum, and the annual employment growth would be 182 and 92 jobs respectively.

Name of Projection Scenario	Summary	Total population change 2022-37 (% change)	Total households change 2022-37 (% change)	Total Dwellings (Dwellings per year)	Employment Growth per year
Lower Variant	Based on lower assumptions of fertility, life expectancy and migration compared to the Principal Population Projections.	129 (0.1%)	5,013 (4.7%)	5,295 (353)	182
PG-Long Term'	Calibrates migration assumptions using ONS data for Mid-year Population Estimates (2001/02 – 2019/20)	1,867 (0.8%)	5,429 (5.1%)	5,730 (382)	92

6.1.13 The lower growth options are perhaps more easily achievable mainly through existing landbank sites, windfall sites and fewer allocations. However, these growth options are less ambitious and would be somewhat contrary to the aspirations of the National Growth Area set out in Future Wales – The National Plan. There is also recognised concern that these growth options would not meet the housing needs of the County Borough, both in terms of affordable housing and market housing. The impact on population growth would also cause further decline in the working age population.

EMPLOYMENT-LED SCENARIOS:

6.1.14 **The final set of growth scenarios are the 'Employment-led Oxford Economics' (OE) and 'Employment-led Policy-on'. The first considers what the impact would be of a 'Policy-off' approach, where population growth is driven by the forecast employment growth trends, without any policy intervention. On the other hand, the Employment-led Policy-on scenario considers the impact to population growth, driven by intervention in employment trends. The BE Group in conjunction with PER Consulting have prepared an Employment Land Review evidence base paper that sets out adjustments to the Oxford Economics forecasts; and assumes specific economic policy intervention to support growth primarily in the B2/B8 industrial land use classes.**

6.1.15 The new housing requirements of these scenarios are 447 and 588 per annum, and the annual employment growth would be 32 and 168 jobs respectively.

Name of Projection Scenario	Summary	Total population change 2022-37 (% change)	Total households change 2022-37 (% change)	Total Dwellings (Dwellings per year)	Employment Growth per year
Employment-led OE	Models the population growth based on the Oxford Economics forecast for employment growth of +32 per year.	3,725 (1.5%)	6,348 (5.8%)	6,705 (447)	32
Employment-led Policy-on	Models the population growth based on the adjusted average annual employment growth of +168 per year for RCT, assuming growth primarily in the industrial land use classes.	8,416 (3.4%)	8,357 (7.6%)	8,820 (588)	168

6.1.16 The employment-led scenarios provide realistic, achievable options, though each with differing outcomes. Both of the scenarios are projected to lead to a decrease in the working age population by the end of the plan period, although this is far more significant in the OE scenario (2.75% decline) than the Policy-On scenario (0.65% decline). Similar to the mid-ranged scenarios, these growth options would be unlikely to achieve the identified need of affordable housing, as set out in the Local Housing Market Assessment 2024 Draft Findings. The OE scenario in particular is considered unlikely to be appropriate for RCT, due to low forecasts of employment and housing growth.

Preferred Growth Option for the Revised LDP – The Welsh Government 2018 Principal Projections.

6.1.17 Given consideration to the analysis, three options stand out as being the most appropriate growth options for the RLDP. These are the two mid-range demographic scenarios and the Policy-on employment scenario. These are projected to deliver the most appropriate and considered levels of housing and employment growth. However, the latter is projected to deliver fewer new jobs than the mid-ranged demographic scenarios and has a negative impact on the working age population.

6.1.18 From the two mid-ranged growth scenarios, the WG-2018 Principal Projection option is considered to produce preferential outcomes for the County Borough compared to the Dwelling-led 5Y variant. The greater housing requirement associated with the WG-2018 option will lead to a greater number of affordable housing and market housing built. It is a more aspirational housing target with regards to being around 10% greater than the past 5 year average housing completion rate, whilst also in-keeping with the national growth area. The analysis method and its parameters also indicate that this would provide over 1,000 more new jobs than the Dwelling-led 5Y growth option. The WG-2018 option is further projected to foresee an increase in the working age population of RCT.

6.1.19 It is recognised that delivering the identified housing need is very challenging however seeking to meet the WG-2018 projections provides the better opportunity to deliver a variety of high quality new housing, including affordable housing. It is felt that aspiring to lower growth levels than these would not be appropriate; although this would be subject to ensuring that the RCT RLDP can fully evidence certainty over its delivery, throughout the plan's preparation.

6.1.20 The Housing Supply Paper sets out the evidence to indicate how this growth option of 8,450 dwellings can be achieved (with an additional, appropriate buffer of housing land). This will be delivered through the housing landbank, an initial total of land from potentially suitable Candidate Sites and a likely windfall housing land contribution.

The Employment Land Review paper and the strategic employment policy later in the Preferred Strategy, also set out how the RLDP will seek to achieve the proposed employment growth.

Neighbouring Local Authority and South East Wales Regional Considerations

6.1.21 It is necessary to note that there are high levels of housing delivery proposed in neighbouring LPAs and South East Wales in general, and this has created an additional consideration that RCT must take account of. Much of this growth is greater than the WG higher growth projections for the respective Authorities. Regional analysis and reports also indicate proposals for growth significantly above the NDF levels. Our evidence base analysis indicates some interdependency between our housing markets and our neighbours'. All this has been fully considered by RCT. However, it remains that there will always be matters ongoing, and proposals in neighbouring authorities, that remain outside our control and may be subject to change.

6.1.22 The Principal Projections that RCT have determined to plan for, remain proportionally lower than others, and aligned with National Policy. We have a duty to ensure we fully understand our own housing, economic and demographic needs in RCT. The RLDP should ensure that we address and meet these specific needs, fulfil our own aspirations for appropriate growth for RCT, alongside the consideration of the NDF regional growth areas and neighbouring authorities.

7 SPATIAL STRATEGY OPTIONS

Introduction

7.1.1 As well as determining how much RCT needs to grow, another crucial element of the Preferred Strategy is where this growth will be accommodated. Although housing is an essential element of the plan, the overall growth considered through the Preferred Strategy is not limited to just homes but also to economic and social development over the plan period.

7.1.2 When developing the Spatial Strategy Options for the RLDP, many factors were considered. Firstly, the spatial options had to accord with national policy, such as the NDF and Planning Policy Wales, which sets out the 'gateway test' in which plans and proposals must be assessed against the strategic and spatial choices issues and the national sustainable placemaking outcomes. This key gateway test ensures that important issues are explored with opportunities identified, along with potential mitigation measures.

7.1.3 The spatial options also have to move in the same direction as other local policy and strategy. These include the Well-being Plan, the RCT Corporate Plan and multiple other strategy documents.

7.1.4 Further, in order to develop the Spatial Strategy Options, the performance of the current LDP was taken into account. This provided excellent evidence of what elements of the previous spatial strategy had worked, what had not and what should be considered to be changed. This was achieved through the analysis of the Annual Monitoring Reports and the LDP Review Report, which shows where development has occurred and is being delivered.

7.1.5 During the visioning and engagement processes mentioned earlier (and in considerable detail in the accompanying evidence base documents of the **Pre-Deposit Consultation Report** and the **Vision, Issues and Objectives Paper**) a number of specific location-based issues were identified. These were used to inform the development of the Spatial Strategy Options for the Preferred Strategy, which in turn has to deliver the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP.

7.1.6   Other sources of background and evidence that informed the Spatial options included:
- **Candidate Sites submitted and Candidate Site Methodology**
- **The Settlement Hierarchy and Assessment Paper**
- **The Urban Capacity Study**
- **The Growth Options Paper**
- **The Housing Supply Paper**
- **The Employment Land Review**
- **The Viability Reports**
- **The Local Housing Market assessment**
- **The Housing Strategy**
- **The Transport Modelling Study**

7.1.7   Also considered is what is evolving on the ground and what could be derived from them; such as the significant investment and development of the South Wales Metro, the growth in the tourism industry and the changing nature of the town centres.

7.1.8   A series of Spatial Strategy Options were formulated based on all the above, concluding with the following:

- **OPTION 1:**
  Continuation of the Current LDP Strategy

- **OPTION 2:**
  Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Settlements

- **OPTION 3:**
  Town Centre First

- **OPTION 4:**
  Southern Growth Strategy

- **OPTION 5:**
  Metro and Public Transport Nodes

- **OPTION 6:**
  Key Strategic Site in the South

- **OPTION 7:**
  Urban Containment

- **OPTION 8:**
  Local Needs Strategy

7.1.9   A comprehensive description, analysis and assessment of these options can be found in the **Spatial Strategy Options Paper.**

7.1.10   All options were considered and assessed against the comprehensive evidence base as listed above. However, a key determining factor was the deliverability of each option, particularly in terms of the scale of land availability. While brownfield-only development in existing urban centres/areas may perform well in sustainability terms; if the approach cannot deliver the required amount of housing and commercial land, it is not realistic.

7.1.11   The Spatial Strategy Options are intrinsically linked with the **Growth Option Paper** and its requirements and conclusions. Failing to deliver the required jobs and homes would also negatively impact upon RCT. It may result in higher levels of trip generation as people are forced to live and work further apart. Therefore, a key challenge for RCT is to balance sustainability aspirations with the realistic deliverability of development under each option, bearing in mind the attractiveness of the southern area to developers compared with the north. **The Housing Supply Paper**, which considers the landbank of available housing land; the Candidate Sites that have gone through early assessments; and the Windfall Sites analysis, also heavily influences the decisions on options.

7.1.12   The Spatial Strategy Options were further considered against the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA), which used the ISA objectives for assessment. The full results of this process can be found in the **ISA of Spatial Options Paper**. Overall, the ISA identified a wide range of positive and negative effects across the options. Further RLDP objectives were also considered against the options.

7.1.13   Another key factor in terms of deliverability of options is the market viability of different parts of the County Borough. High-level viability assessment, in the **Viability Reports** was commissioned to provide information on viability/market areas to inform the RLDP.

OPTION 1:
Continuation of the current LDP Strategy

7.1.14   The current LDP strategy is a hybrid strategy, which provides development in locations that meet local needs whilst promoting sustainable growth. The strategy area is divided into two distinct parts, North and South where a different policy approach is taken for each. Development in the current strategy is focussed around the Principal Towns and Key Settlements, as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy, whilst also allocating large scale mixed-use development on eight Strategic Sites.

7.1.15   It is clear from the monitoring of the LDP that some elements of this strategy have worked and others have not. The current Strategy has seen a considerable 7,784 new houses built during the plan period. A total of 3,050 dwellings were built in the Northern Strategy Area and 4,734 in the Southern Strategy Area. However, this was only just over half of the allocated amount.

7.1.16   The completion rate on all allocations was low, (both housing and employment) and particularly so on a number of Strategic Sites that were heavily relied upon for delivery. Development has continued in earnest on the Llanilid site in recent years and development has occurred on the employment element of Robertstown/Abernant and preparation of the employment element at Land South of Hirwaun. Recent advancements should see further development on Mwyndy/Talbot Green and Abernant in the near future. The fact remains that at least three brownfield Strategic Sites cannot currently be relied upon for high-density development. The Strategy has however seen substantial development on non-allocated/windfall sites, particularly brownfield sites that have contributed greatly to the objectives of the LDP and its policies. This has also been witnessed with regards to commercial development and redevelopment within existing employment sites.

7.1.17 In assessing this option, the north/south split element and intentions of the Strategy are still relevant, alongside the settlement hierarchy. This current Strategy may not be fully appropriate to be taken forward in its entirety, although there are clear positive elements that should remain.

● OPTION 2:
Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Settlements

7.1.18 This option proposes development in those parts of the County Borough that benefit the most from their proximity to the M4, A470 and A465 corridors. This generally aligns with the Principal Settlements of Talbot Green/Pontyclun/Llantrisant, Pontypridd and Aberdare, being at the head of the Settlement Hierarchy.

7.1.19 To a certain extent, this could be classed as an option, which further promotes car use as it is based around the strategic highway network. This of course would not be in line with national policy, which promotes a modal shift away from car-based development. However rather than just a car-based strategy, it seeks to expand the ongoing regeneration in and around these Principal Settlement corridors. This includes the boost in tourism in the northern Cynon Valley, the regeneration seen in Pontypridd and the market demand in the Taff Ely area. With regards to the A465 'Heads of the Valleys' road in particular, the considerable investment by the Welsh Government in the northern valleys corridor was intended to increase economic prosperity in this sub-region. This is clearly something that the RLDP must maximise the benefits of, which should include general economic growth and the strengthening of the evolving tourism economy in the north of RCT.

● OPTION 3:
Town Centre First

7.1.20 This option seeks a town centre first approach to the location of development, with a sequential approach used. It identifies development sites which are in close proximity to the Principal Settlements and Key Settlements, as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy. This option promotes sustainable travel by locating development close to public transport and close to employment opportunities, services and facilities to achieve sustainable living and modal shift.

7.1.21 This option would clearly accord with national policy and fit in with the wider Settlement Hierarchy. It is very sustainable, being close to facilities whilst it would be an efficient use of land and minimise the need to travel. Thus providing sustainable transport options, when transport is required. It would also support the continued regeneration of RCT's town centres. However, it is very apparent that there is not enough suitable land to achieve the objectives of the RLDP, and in particular the necessary scale of development growth, with this strategy option alone. A Town Centre First approach, as set out in national policy, should always be a strong premise in an LDP and should be set out in the plan's policies. In particular, the Urban Capacity Study evidence base document indicates the limitations of this option.

OPTION 4:
Southern Growth Strategy

7.1.22 This strategy option focuses on locating growth in the southern area of RCT (Taff Ely area) with a particular focus on the M4 corridor. The key elements of this option are to locate the majority of growth in the south, which would require greenfield release. This would see limited growth in the northern areas, which would just accommodate local need.

7.1.23 The major benefit with this option is that it can deliver the required level of growth and has a proven track record of delivery, whilst also being an area of demand that is viable. This option would allow the ability to improve community and other infrastructure and could deliver more affordable housing. This area of RCT is more limited in public transport infrastructure and some areas are not very sustainable.

OPTION 5:
Metro and Public Transport Nodes

7.1.24 This option would focus development around public transport hubs, corridors and existing stations and maximise development within walking or cycling distance to Metro stations and hubs, which in general accords with the Settlement Hierarchy. It would seek growth in those areas best served by public transport and reduce the need to travel by private vehicle.

7.1.25 This would have significant, positive effects associated with sustainable and active modes of travel and providing access to jobs without being so reliant on car use; ultimately reducing the need to travel. The reasonably dispersed development that would occur under this option would also have positive effects in terms of stimulating regeneration in different parts of the County Borough, as well as supporting retail and commercial centres. However, it is very apparent that there is not enough suitable land to achieve the objectives of the RLDP, and in particular the scale of growth, with this strategy option alone.

OPTION 6:
Key Strategic Site in the South

7.1.26 This option would see the allocation of a large Key Site in the south of the County Borough, which would accommodate a significant majority of the new housing and other development over the plan period supported by smaller allocations spread through the County Borough to address local need.

7.1.27 By allocating a Key Site in the south, which has a proven track record of delivery, it is likely that this option would deliver the majority of the growth needed for the plan period. By allocating a larger site it would be possible to deliver a mix of uses and to include appropriate infrastructure and facilities. Sustainability in some areas is a concern, as is limited public transport. There is also the risk with a large site that the delivery may be slower than multiple smaller sites. Furthermore, if a larger site fails to deliver, it will likely lead to the strategy not being met.

OPTION 7:
Urban Containment

7.1.28 This strategy option seeks to deliver growth within the current urban area without the need to release new land for development. The key elements of this strategy seek to support the re use, conversion and redevelopment of empty, underused and derelict properties and land (i.e. development on brownfield land) within current settlement limits. The strategy would also be supported by windfall releases and current committed sites and follows the pattern of the Settlement Hierarchy.

7.1.29 This would have significant positive effects associated with facilitating more use of sustainable and active modes of travel within the existing communities. The reasonably dispersed development that would occur under this option would also have positive effects in terms of stimulating regeneration in different parts of the County Borough. It would also offer good opportunities for using brownfield land and delivering development close to existing services, facilities and transport links. However the strategy option would result in overall lower levels of growth, notwithstanding the fact that there is not sufficient land available to deliver this option.

OPTION 8:
Local Needs Strategy

7.1.30 This option is based on the principle of addressing the needs of each individual settlement, which would result in a dispersed form of growth across RCT. This would result in proportionate development allocations to reflect the size and scale of associated settlements along with the affordable and market housing need.

7.1.31 This option would see growth where it is needed, which would reduce the pressure on other areas of RCT.

7.1.32 Given that future development would be within existing settlements, the option would have significant positive effects associated with more use of sustainable and active modes of travel and reduction of car use. The reasonably dispersed development that would occur under this option would also have positive effects in terms of stimulating regeneration in different parts of the County Borough. However there is not sufficient land to deliver the required growth in many of the areas of need. Viability in some of these areas would also reduce the likelihood of sufficient delivery of affordable housing.

Potential Preferred Spatial Strategy

7.1.33 In conclusion, the analysis of these options highlight that there are very positive aspects to each one. However, no single option would be appropriate on its own to meet the necessary levels of growth, and the breadth of the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP.

7.1.34 However, it has been determined that the fundamental elements of the current LDP Spatial Strategy remain appropriate, as a sound foundation for the Revised LDP. The evidence base suggests that there remains a clear need for the continuation of a distinct difference in strategy approach for the north and the south of the County Borough.

7.1.35 The scale of growth that can be accommodated in the south over the whole plan period is shown to be greater than in the north; and at a scale that is necessary to meet our required housing and employment needs. Although there are more known opportunities for housing growth in the initial part of the plan period, the northern area would need to benefit from a varied approach to delivering growth over the whole plan period.

7.1.36 Nevertheless, in considering the evidence that has informed the Spatial Strategy Options, and the analysis of them; the positive aspects of each option would contribute to meeting the objectives of the LDP, and the distinct requirements and characteristics of the northern and southern parts of the County Borough.

REVISED LDP PREFERRED STRATEGY

Aims of the Preferred Strategy

8.1.1 The Preferred Strategy builds upon the Vision of the Revised LDP, which seeks a more resilient and sustainable RCT:

- An area of sustainable, cohesive communities who are healthy, well connected and who have equal access to high quality homes, jobs, services and facilities.

- An area more resilient and considerate to the challenges of climate change with protected and enhanced biodiversity and green spaces and a well-connected sustainable transport system.

- An area with a diverse and healthy economy, supported by vibrant and viable town centres and a flourishing tourism sector. An RCT that celebrates its heritage and is resilient for the future.

8.1.2 The Preferred Strategy, at its highest level, seeks to ensure an approach that will achieve this Vision and the identified Objectives. It is supported by a framework of Strategic Policies.

8.1.3 The findings of the Strategic Growth and Spatial Options, alongside the Settlement Hierarchy, (and all the evidence gathered to inform them), come together to formulate the most appropriate and deliverable Preferred Strategy.

Proposed Level of Growth

8.1.4   A suitable level of growth for the RLDP for the period 2022-2037 has been determined, which has been derived from the Welsh Government 2018 Principal Population Projections. These are based on fertility, mortality, migration and household composition assumptions. The projections equate to new housing requirements of 8,450 across the Revised LDP plan period, or 564 dwellings to be built per annum. The assumed level of jobs growth associated with this, through the modelling calculation, is a total of 3,990 or 266 each year.

8.1.5   The dwelling and job growth projected by these scenarios are reflective of RCT's position within the National Growth Area of Cardiff, Newport and The Valleys in Future Wales – The National Plan.

8.1.6   It is both positive and aspirational in seeking to achieve the necessary levels of market and affordable housing and economic growth in RCT. Although challenging, it is considered achievable and deliverable.

8.1.7   The **Housing Supply Paper** and the strategic housing policy, later in the Preferred Strategy, sets out the evidence to indicate that this growth option housing requirement of 8,450 dwellings can be achieved (with an additional 10% buffer to set the housing provision).

8.1.8   The Employment Land Review paper and the strategic employment policy, further set out how the RLDP will seek to achieve the proposed employment growth.

8.1.9   This level of growth will be achieved by an appropriate Spatial Strategy.

Spatial Strategy

8.1.10   The findings of the Spatial Options analysis have been quite clear in that there is not an individual approach that could deliver the proposed growth, and ultimately the whole RLDP effectively. However, it identifies that several of the Spatial Strategy Options have elements of them that would be appropriate and able to contribute significantly to its delivery.

8.1.11   It is necessary to propose a Preferred Strategy that is a combination of the most positive aspects of the **Spatial Strategy Options**. This should also take into account the distinctive social, environmental and economic characteristics of different parts of the County Borough, and the identified and required level of growth, aligned with where this can be achieved.

8.1.12 A key Spatial Strategy consideration for the whole of the County Borough is associated with the affordable housing need, as set out in the **Spatial Strategy Options**, and informed by the **Local Housing Market Assessment Draft Findings**. The **Housing Supply Paper** then sets out the relationship between the intended methods of delivery of the overall housing provision and the delivery of affordable housing. The Strategy below proposes a spatial spread of delivery of the overall housing provision that closely aligns with the identified sub housing market areas and their affordable housing need. Later sections of this Preferred Strategy set out the location of the proposed strategic scale of housing delivery in the RLDP, and its relationship with these specific areas.

8.1.13 Different parts of the County Borough exhibit very distinct and different characteristics, particularly between the north and south. This has led to different Issues being identified and needing to be addressed. One of the key findings of the Strategy Options is that the fundamental elements of the current LDP Spatial Strategy remains appropriate, as a foundation for the Revised LDP. There is a clear need for the continuation of a distinct difference in strategy approach for the north and the south of the County Borough, to address the Issues and achieve the Objectives of the RLDP.

8.1.14 However, additional Spatial Strategy elements and Strategic Policies are needed to build upon the considerable successes of the existing plan to date. These will positively address those objectives in the current LDP that have not been as successful, or where new issues have arisen and need addressing, or where up to date opportunities have been realised. Elements of the current LDP strategy that are no longer required, will be removed or addressed.

Preferred Strategy

8.1.15 The overall Vision, Objectives and Growth intentions of the RLDP are in place for all the County Borough. Similarly, most of the Strategic Policies that follow, and their intentions, apply to most areas of RCT.

8.1.16 However, specific strategy and some policy approaches for the geographically defined Northern and Southern Strategy Areas will ensure a more appropriate and prosperous, plan-led future for these respective areas.

8.1.17 The Revised LDP Preferred Strategy is therefore defined as a combined '**Northern Sustainable Communities and Southern Sustainable Growth Strategy**', for the distinct Northern and Southern Strategy Areas.

Sustainable Communities in the Northern Strategy Area

8.1.18 **The spatial strategy for the north of RCT seeks to set out distinct approaches and interventions in the Northern Strategy Area (NSA). The primary aim of the Northern Sustainable Community Strategy is to continue to strengthen the communities therein. For the most part, the urban areas in the NSA are those in the Rhondda Fawr, Rhondda Fach and Cynon Valleys.**

8.1.19 The current LDP has seen considerable development and economic growth in some areas in the NSA. This RLDP will seek opportunities to extend this trend to all areas within the NSA. It also aims to ensure the continued halting of depopulation, as has been positively achieved by the current LDP Strategy.

Housing Delivery

8.1.20 The levels of housing growth in the NSA will contribute significantly to the overall RLDP level of growth, but will be lower here comparatively than in the Southern Strategy Area. Anticipated growth is also greater in the front end of the plan period than the latter. The combined large and small housing landbank indicates a significant 1,561 dwellings that are likely to come forward in the first half of the plan period, in the NSA. Most of the larger sites are around the Principal Settlement of Aberdare, with a range of medium and smaller sites across the area:

NSA	Dwellings in Landbank
Rhondda	592
Cynon	969
TOTAL	**1,561**

8.1.21 Continued delivery of windfall housing is also expected throughout the RLDP plan period, with more opportunities in the NSA, as identified through the Urban Capacity Study and from past trends analysis in the Housing Supply Paper.

8.1.22 It remains that there is less scope and reliance for new housing allocations to support the NSA in the latter stages of the plan. Fewer and smaller appropriate Candidate Sites have come forward. Many of our NSA valleys communities are within high-level flood risk zones, rendering much suitably located brownfield land limited in its potential for redevelopment. Similarly, the urban edges of the NSA are important ecological habits for protected biodiversity.

8.1.23 Although there is significant Open Space and Green Infrastructure in the County Borough, we need to continue to protect, improve and enhance this and to improve access where possible. These areas play so many important roles in our communities.

8.1.24 The Viability Report indicates that larger, and particularly greenfield sites would have the more appropriate levels of market-led viability for their confident delivery in the NSA. Allocations will be made at the Deposit Stage of the RLDP; although it is indicated that in general, the NSA would provide approximately a third of the housing provision identified for RCT.

Employment

8.1.25 There are many employment sites in the NSA, of different scales, age and condition. There have been multiple, positive new commercial development and redevelopment schemes on these sites throughout the current plan period. There remain many opportunities for further development on known employment landbank sites and windfall redevelopment on the employment estates in the NSA. These would contribute to the expected jobs growth associated with the level of housing growth proposed. This is set out further in the Employment Land Review Paper and the Strategic Employment Policy.

8.1.26 Proposals for a potential key housing site and a key mixed employment site are set out further, below.

Settlement Hierarchy

8.1.27 Development in the NSA should align, where possible, with the identified RLDP Settlement Hierarchy. The Principal Settlement of Aberdare, along with the Key Settlements of Hirwaun, Mountain Ash, Ferndale, Porth, Treorchy and Tonypandy, play an essential role in their communities across the NSA. These settlements provide a wide range of social, economic and environmental services and facilities for existing communities. They have been shown, and are encouraged to be, the most appropriate locations for accommodating future growth – of all types of development. Equally, overall development growth is seen as key in supporting the future of these places.

8.1.28 The associated Settlement Centres play a significant role in the heart of these Settlements, and new development, (or redevelopment of existing property) here should further support them and their detailed future strategies. This is set out further in strategic policy below.

8.1.29 Development would be acceptable in smaller settlements, which have suitable facilities and appropriate sustainable transport links to the higher order settlements.

8.1.30 The spatial options for locating development in Settlement Centres, around metro hubs, meeting local needs and urban containment where possible, are therefore very appropriate in the NSA and are incorporated into the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Development in the NSA will be encouraged to align with these approaches, which allow for very sustainable forms of development. This, in essence, follows National Policy by seeking a Town Centre First approach to the location of new development. This overarching principle of sustainable locations would translate the intentions of the RLDP into the Council's approach to tackle Climate Change and reduce the production of Carbon. This is set out further in strategic policy below.

Other proposed methods of delivery of the Northern Sustainable Communities Strategy:

● FLEXIBLE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES

8.1.31 Although it is difficult to quantify, it is expected that windfall sites will continue to deliver housing in the NSA, at a rate that may go up to 100 a year from 2026 onwards. As with the current LDP, it is proposed that the Settlement Boundaries here may be more flexible. This is to give the chance for suitable sites to come forward over the plan period; as searches for sites whilst preparing the RLDP have otherwise shown one or several of the constraints mentioned above e.g. flood risk, ecology, value in terms of public open space etc. More detailed policies will be prepared for the Deposit Stage.

● SOUTH EAST WALES METRO

8.1.32 The significant investment in the South Wales Metro, which serves significant urban areas of the NSA in the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys, should be taken advantage of wherever possible. New development near to the stations will be supported, in principle. The Council continues to improve a comprehensive Active Travel network to make these facilities more accessible.

● EMPTY HOMES

8.1.33 RCT sets out keen ambitions to bring empty residential properties back into use. Although this process is essentially bringing new houses onto the market, they cannot be considered like-for-like, as a new dwelling that would be included in the housing provision. The Housing Supply Paper and Strategic Housing Policy sets this out further, although there are currently 2,120 empty homes located in the NSA. With recent past rates of completion as high as 273 in 2021/22, along with current available funding, it is expected that the Council's Empty Homes Strategy will continue to form the source of many available new, starter family homes; this will clearly play a major role in the Northern Sustainable Communities Strategy.

● TOURISM

8.1.34 The Tourism industry in RCT has continued to see considerable growth in recent years, whilst our Tourism Strategy seeks to continue its success. This is particularly the case in the Northern Strategy Area, where the open countryside and proximity to the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and its features, is a growing attraction not just for the residents of RCT but also nationally and internationally. There is strong attraction to the South Wales Valleys from UK wide adventure sports enthusiasts, with the ever-expanding Zip World Tower at Hirwaun being a headline for RCT.

8.1.35 The heritage of the County Borough also attracts from far and wide, along with day trips from the region to our town centres and parks. This Preferred Strategy includes a strategic tourism policy for the RLDP, particularly in the NSA. This will set out some higher-level guidance and encouragement for suitable Tourism proposals. This would be the facilities themselves, both in our Settlement Centres and in appropriate countryside locations. It similarly sets out the suitability for accommodation development i.e. hotels, rental accommodation or even holiday parks.

8.1.36 This is considered a key strategic intention for the future of the NSA. Not only does this industry bring considerable investment and spending to the area, but it is seen as a very realistic diversification for the area in terms of new employment opportunities. It also gives our Settlement Centres a much-needed positive prospect for the future. Again, a major role in the Northern Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Potential Key Sites

8.1.37 Similar to the Strategic Sites in the current LDP, the RLDP should identify sites that are 'Key' to the delivery of the Strategy.

8.1.38 It should be noted at this point that the Strategic Sites at Fernhill Colliery, Maerdy and Phurnacite will no longer be considered in this way. The LDP plan period has indicated the ongoing uncertainty and constraints associated with the sites and their development proposals. We cannot confidently rely upon them for the scale of delivery that they have previously been allocated for. Potential for alternative uses will be considered through the Deposit Stage of the RLDP. The Employment element of Robertstown Strategic Site has been developed, with the former Aberdare Hospital site in the Landbank of committed housing sites.

8.1.39 POTENTIAL KEY SITE 1
Penrhys Village, Tylorstown

8.1.40 **Advance plans are in place for the redevelopment of the village of Penrhys on the 29.8 hectare site. The overall intention is to replace existing housing stock with up to 700 new private market and affordable dwellings, alongside the replacement and improvement of public facilities and services. It is considered that approximately 500 of these will be delivered in the RLDP Plan period. The proposals include a mix of uses including renewed community uses and education facilities, renewable energy, leisure and tourism. The size of the proposed allocation offers the potential to protect SINC habitat and to mitigate and enhance biodiversity.**

8.1.41 Although the net gain of new dwellings may be a modest 200 dwellings in terms of the housing provision in the plan period (and a further 200 beyond this time); the considerable scale of the new housing stock proposed plan period is a very positive aspiration and statement for the Rhondda. This part of the NSA has seen few larger scale housing developments over recent years.

8.1.42 POTENTIAL KEY SITE 2
Land South of Hirwaun

8.1.43 **The land allocated for employment in the current LDP Strategic Site at Hirwaun underwent a vast opencast mining operation throughout the current LDP plan period. This was for the pre-extraction of coal reserves, to allow the allocated development to continue. This work has been completed, and the site extends to approximately 160 hectares.**

8.1.44 The RLDP sees the site as being able to broaden its proposed uses. This includes the continuation of the proposed employment uses, with 15 to 20 hectares of employment land suitable here. There is then seen an opportunity for 30 - 40 hectares of land for future tourism opportunities and investment. Much of the remainder of the site is then subject to the re-establishment of biodiversity and natural habitats, along with future nature conservation; this is associated with the agreed restoration of the site following the opencast scheme. However, it is further considered that this natural area may be appropriately designed to allow for suitable public access and ecological and geomorphological tourism. This would be on site but may also include links to the wider countryside, with its multiple natural attractions and modern tourism destinations.

8.1.45 The scale of this proposal is clearly key in the NSA. However, it is also considered key to take full advantage of the significant Welsh Government investment in dualling the adjacent A465 'Heads of the Valleys' trunk road. This road opens up this South Wales Valleys sub-region to the midlands of England and West Wales. It is essential that RCT grasp this opportunity to bring investment to the NSA, rather than let it drive past.

8.1.46 Furthermore, a combined Transport for Wales and RCT proposal has had Weltag 2 approval for the continuation of the passenger rail line from Aberdare up to Hirwaun Industrial Estate. The new stations proposed at Hirwaun and Hirwaun Industrial Estate would make the wider area far more sustainable in terms of the public transport options serving them. The station at the industrial estate would also be in close proximity to the potential Key Site.
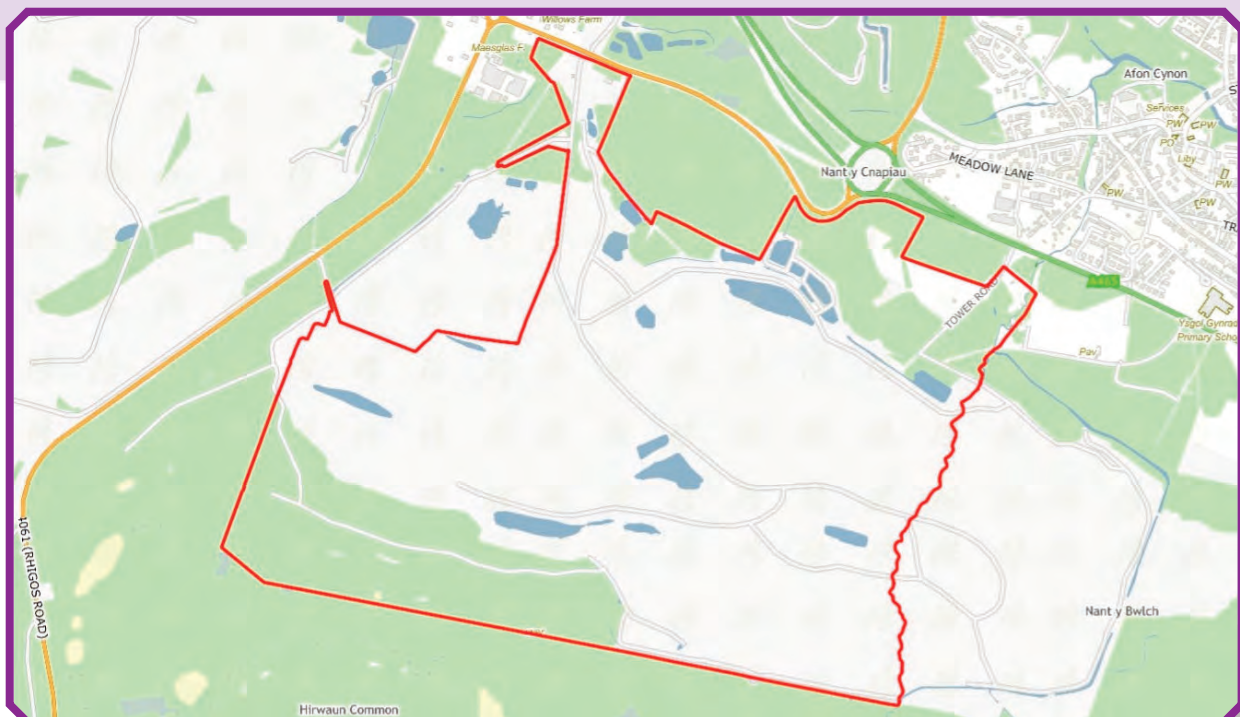
Sustainable Growth Strategy in the Southern Strategy Area

8.1.47 **The spatial strategy for the south of RCT sets out specific approaches to achieving a high proposed level of housing growth in this Southern Strategy Area (SSA), particularly when compared to the NSA. The Sustainable Growth Strategy will seek to provide the necessary growth for existing communities, with additional growth to meet the wider needs of the whole of RCT and accord with Future Wales – The National Plan.**

8.1.48 The current LDP has seen considerable development and economic growth in some areas in the SSA. For the most part, the urban areas in the SSA are those around Pontypridd down to Taffs Well and Church Village in the east, and Tonyrefail down to the wider Llantrisant area to Llanharan in the west. This RLDP will seek opportunities to provide new housing and economic development in areas where there is a more proven market-led delivery and sustainably located and suitable development land.

Housing Delivery

8.1.49 The levels of housing growth in the SSA will contribute the greater proportion of the overall RLDP level of growth, in comparison with the NSA. This will be achieved through the continued development of sites within the housing landbank and through the identification of suitable, sustainable new allocations. The combined large and small housing landbank indicates that a significant 2,562 dwellings are likely to come forward in the SSA, in the first half of the plan period:

SSA Southern Strategy Area	Dwellings in Landbank
Taff East	225
Taff West	2,337
TOTAL	**2,562**

8.1.50 The majority of these dwellings are on large sites in the west of the SSA, and particularly on the Strategic Sites at Llanilid and Cefn Yr Hendy/Talbot Green. There are significantly fewer landbank sites in the eastern side of the SSA. Although there will be unforeseen windfall sites that do come forward, they are not as likely to be in the same number as is expected in the NSA; which is indicated in the Urban Capacity Study and from past trends analysis in the Housing Supply Paper.

8.1.51 Many Candidate Sites have come forward in the SSA, several of which are significant in size. A substantial amount of these have constraints similar to those in the NSA, particularly in existing urban areas and on brownfield sites. However, more opportunities are presenting themselves in the SSA for suitable housing sites. The scale of growth requires that the proposed sites are in sustainable locations, whilst trying to spread the delivery across the Settlement Hierarchy.

8.1.52 It remains that RCT needs to protect, improve and enhance our Open Space and Green Infrastructure in the County Borough. There are far fewer large areas of open access land for the residents of the SSA than in the NSA, which indicates a need for new development to provide, extend or improve access to such places.

8.1.53 **The Viability Report** indicates that all types of development sites in the SSA may have a fair level of market led viability to ensure their delivery, and the southern part of the SSA is the most viable in RCT overall. Allocations will be made at the Deposit Stage of the RLDP, although it is indicated that in general, the SSA would provide approximately two thirds of the housing provision identified for the RLDP.

8.1.54 It is inevitable that many of these allocations will need to be greenfield releases due to the distinct lack of brownfield land available in this area.

8.1.55 Allocations in the SSA will need to be carefully chosen and will be larger in size to allow further supporting infrastructure to be developed, where possible, as set out in the associated **Spatial Strategy Options**. There are proposals to improve the public transport infrastructure in the SSA. Improved bus services have been considered from Bridgend through to Llanharan and Pontypridd and across the central South Wales Valleys. Continued advancement of proposals to bring forward light rail infrastructure from central Cardiff out into northwest Cardiff, should extend into south east RCT. Consideration is also given to whether further main train line capacity to serve the south west of the County Borough could materialise in the plan period.

Employment

8.1.56 There are many employment sites in the SSA, of different scales, age and condition. There have been many positive new developments and redevelopment schemes on these sites throughout the current plan period. Major industrial and commercial estates of sub-regional importance such as Treforest Industrial Estate, Llantrisant Business Park and the wider Talbot Green Industrial Estate are thriving, with very low levels of vacancy. There still remain opportunities for further windfall redevelopment on these and other estates and capacity for new development on employment landbank sites. These would contribute to the expected jobs growth associated with the level of housing growth proposed. This is set out further in the Employment Land Review Paper and the Strategic Employment Policy.

8.1.57 Proposals for a potential Key Site for mixed housing, employment and open space uses, along with ecological management are set out further, below.

Settlement Hierarchy

8.1.58 Development in the SSA should align, where possible, with the identified RLDP Settlement Hierarchy. The Principal Settlements of Pontypridd and Talbot Green/Pontyclun/Llantrisant, along with the Key Settlements of Llanharan and Tonyrefail, play an essential role in their communities across the SSA. These settlements provide a wide range of social, economic and environmental services and facilities for existing communities. They have been shown, and are encouraged to be, the most appropriate locations for the accommodating future growth. Equally, overall development growth is seen as key in supporting the future of these places.

8.1.59 The associated Settlement Centres play a significant role in the heart of these Settlements, and new development, (or redevelopment of existing property) here should further support them and their detailed future strategies. This is set out further in strategic policy below.

8.1.60 The spatial options for locating development in Settlement Centres, around metro hubs, meeting local needs and urban containment where possible, are still very appropriate in the SSA and are incorporated into the Sustainable Growth Strategy. Development in the SSA will be encouraged to align with these approaches, which allow for very sustainable forms of development. This in essence follows National Policy of seeking a Town Centre First approach to the location of new development. This overarching principle of sustainable locations would translate the intentions of the RLDP into the Council's approach to tackle Climate Change and reduce the production of Carbon. This is set out further in strategic policy below. However, it is acknowledged that the level of growth proposed here would see some settlements expand substantially, albeit sustainably.

Other proposed methods of delivery of the Southern Sustainable Growth Strategy:

● THE PRINCIPAL SETTLEMENT OF PONTYPRIDD

8.1.61 The Principal Settlement of Pontypridd has limited capacity for housing growth, in terms of available land for development. Development within the Settlement Centre in Pontypridd will be supported, although will not likely produce high numbers of dwellings. Further, housing development is needed in and around this Principal Settlement for its continued prosperity, local needs and its ambitions as a leading destination in the region. Conversely, further development is needed here to take full advantage of its capacity to provide for a greater population. This would include through the Settlement Centre and its retail and leisure facilities and services therein, the University at Treforest, and the Treforest Industrial Estate. This eastern side of the SSA also benefits the most from the ongoing South Wales Metro development.

8.1.62 It is continued from the current LDP, that in principle, development would be acceptable in smaller settlements, which have suitable and sustainable links to the wider Pontypridd settlement, including, but not limited to, the areas around e.g. Church Village, Llanilltud Faerdref and Beddau. Further, as mentioned above, it is necessary to seek to address the considerable affordable housing need in the wider Pontypridd area in these edge of centre settlements.

● SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES

8.1.63 There will be rigidly defined settlement boundaries in the SSA, which would prevent incremental development proposals coming forward. Sites will be allocated appropriately in sustainable locations, and as indicated, often larger sites, which can benefit from their economies of scale of development. Major sections of the SSA have been formed by the continued development of housing estates over the past 70 years. Accordingly, the pattern of development does not support incremental small developments on its edges.

● TOURISM AND EMPTY PROPERTIES

8.1.64 The opportunities and reliance on the policy interventions of empty properties and tourism in the SSA are not likely to be as great as in the NSA.

8.1.65 There are empty properties in the south that will come forward through the Empty Properties scheme, but not at the same scale or rate as in the NSA.

8.1.66 The SSA has its tourism attractions such as the Royal Mint and Pontypridd Town. However, it is considered to have more of a tourism link to Cardiff than perhaps to the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. Tourism facilities will be supported in the SSA, although past trends have included more local leisure based facilities, such as diversification of agriculture in the countryside. Accommodation facilities will be promoted in the settlements and not in countryside locations, as set out further in strategic policy.

Key Sites in the SSA

8.1.67 It should be noted at this point that the Strategic Site at the Former Cwm Coking Works will no longer be considered in this way. The LDP plan period has indicated the ongoing uncertainty and constraints associated with the site and its development proposals. We cannot confidently rely upon it for the scale of delivery it has been allocated for. The site has been considered for Cardiff Capital Region funding to help bring it forward. If this comes forward as anticipated, the site may be considered for alternative uses, such as a Regeneration Site, through the Deposit Stage of the RLDP.

8.1.68 POTENTIAL KEY SITE 3
Land at Llanilid

8.1.69 **This Key Site is located on the previous open cast coal site at Llanilid, adjoining the south of the Key Settlement of Llanharan; being a strategic location in RCT. The site totals 269 hectares. The proposal for the site builds upon the success of the Strategic Site allocation in the current LDP, which is currently under construction. The site provides the opportunity to regenerate a previous open cast site to create a sustainable mixed-use development.**

8.1.70 The proposals for this site include residential development, schools, employment, local and district centres, and play and open spaces. The proposal also includes the retention of vast swathes of public open space and green infrastructure, whilst protecting and enhancing a range of important biodiversity features.

8.1.71 Proposals for the site seek to incorporate exemplar design and place-making and a network of sustainable transport that will serve the development, and link to the existing communities.

8.1.72 The site is seen as being capable of delivering a significant number of dwellings and employment land over the plan period in the Key Settlement. Due to the significant size of the site, the proposals are intended to be delivered over this plan period and further into the next one after 2037. It is envisaged that the site may deliver over 3,000 houses in total, however it is unlikely that more than 1,500 will come forward during the plan period to 2037.
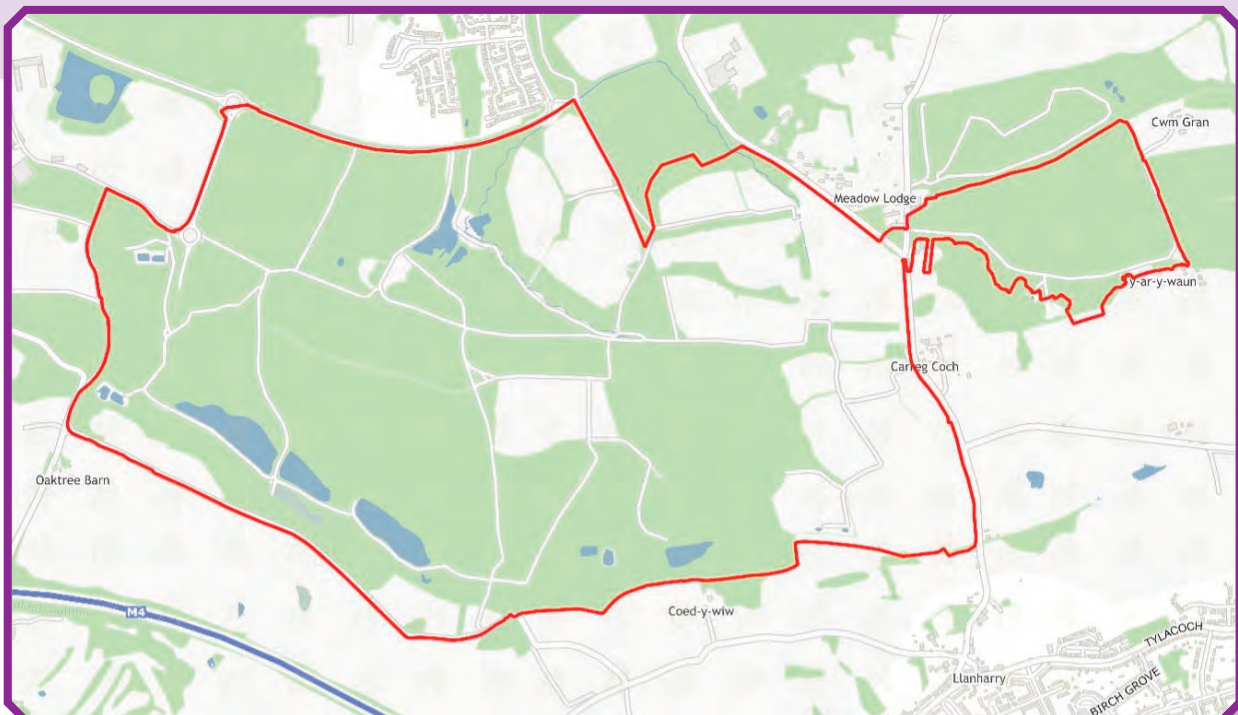
8.1.39 POTENTIAL KEY SITE 4
Llanilltud Faerdref/Efail Isaf

8.1.74 **This potential Key Site is made up of a number of Candidate Sites in adjoining locations on the south of the wider settlements of Llanilltud Faerdref and Efail Isaf.**

8.1.75 When combined, the whole site totals 50 hectares of greenfield land. It is considered that this Key Site could accommodate up to approximately 1,000 new homes, along with a range of proposed supporting uses to ensure the sustainable growth of the site. These include a new school, local shops, shared working hub, formal playing fields and areas, informal public open space and green infrastructure networks.

8.1.76 The retention of existing landscape features alongside pedestrian and cycle access links, will ensure the most modern accessible design and place-making. It is noted that the line of the former railway that runs through the eastern element of the site should be safeguarded for any future active or other sustainable travel options. The site benefits from safe access, where necessary, over and under the Church Village bypass, into the nearby settlements. It is considered that this new housing growth will bring the benefits of increased facilities and community infrastructure to existing communities, whilst increased footfall will benefit the local centres.

8.1.77 The site is in a strategic location with good access to social, employment, educational, public transport and major highway facilities that exist close to the site, in the wider area of the Pontypridd Principal Settlement and Treforest Industrial Estate. This Key Site is further seen as an opportunity to support the prosperity of Pontypridd, whilst making a significant contribution to the delivery of the necessary overall growth of the RLDP.
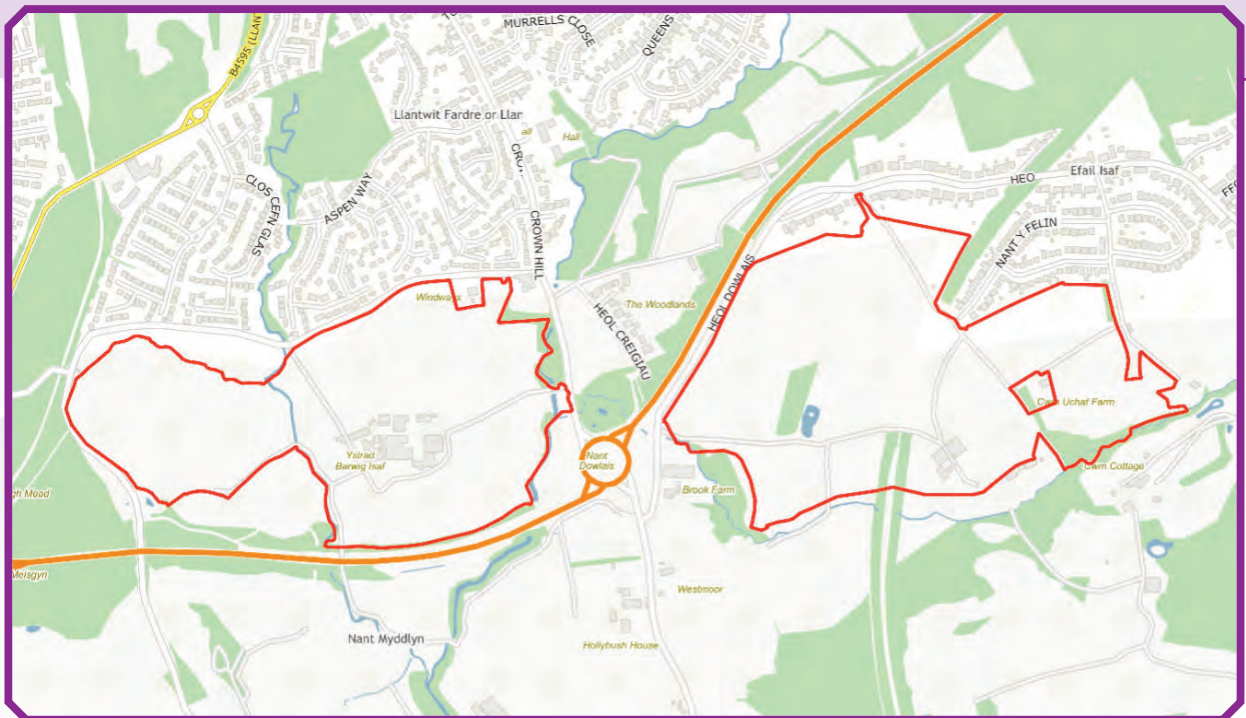
PREFERRED STRATEGY KEY DIAGRAM

STRATEGIC POLICIES

SP1:

Climate Change and Carbon

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **4**, **5**, **9**, **10**, **11**, **12** and **13**

1

Development proposals must demonstrate climate consideration, aim to reduce carbon emissions and where possible mitigate against the causes of climate change.

All allocations for development in the Revised LDP will be located in sustainable locations. This has been determined in accordance with the Candidate Site Methodology, which itself accords with national planning policy. Sustainable locations are places, which would reduce the need to travel and have reduced dependence on private vehicles. This would therefore contribute to the reduction in future carbon emissions.

All other new development proposals throughout the plan period will be expected to be in sustainable locations.

The design of new development should also be more carbon considerate. Development proposals should:

- Promote construction methods and materials that would seek to achieve carbon neutral buildings.
- Incorporate low or renewable sources of energy and technologies.
- Maximise the opportunities for Electric vehicle charging.
- Seek to embrace the circular economy, ensuring resource efficiency, local materials and sustainable construction methods to avoid unnecessary wastage.

Natural assets play a large part in tackling climate change. The Revised LDP will seek to:

- Protect green infrastructure and the multifunctional role it can play in reducing carbon emissions e.g. the management of peat bogs, protection of carbon storing semi-natural habitats and soils, appropriate forms of planting, protection of trees and natural regeneration of woodland.
- Some green infrastructure can also contribute to urban well-being e.g. provide cooling in times of extreme heat.

1

- Safeguard high quality agricultural land to support and promote opportunities for farming and local food production, to reduce carbon emissions and food miles.
- Brownfield land is used in preference to greenfield land, where possible.

Renewable Energy

Appropriate renewable energy schemes are supported. This will be subject to further detailed analysis of the NDF search areas, which would indicate appropriate locations and capacity for future development in RCT; this will be set out in more detail at the Deposit stage.

Waste

We will continue to reduce the amount of waste generated and continue to recycle and deliver innovative recycling solutions.

The Council is committed to playing its part in tackling the causes of climate change by reducing carbon emissions. We are making good progress, but we all need to do more, and faster, if we are help to reverse the damage to our planet and adapt to the changes already happening, both within the Council and within the County Borough.

Welsh Government made a climate emergency declaration in 2019. As such, it is imperative that the RLDP reduces carbon emissions that contribute towards the potentially devastating impacts of climate change. In order to do so the Council has developed a climate change strategy **Think Climate Change**. The RLDP will support this strategy to deliver its ambitions.

The RLDP will ensure that the allocations included within it are in sustainable locations, which reduce the need to travel and thus reduce carbon emissions. This is set out clearly in the **Candidate Site Methodology**, which the sites have been assessed against. All other new development throughout the plan period will also be expected to reduce carbon emission and be in sustainable locations, which reduces the need to travel and lessens the reliance on the private vehicle.

Future Wales – The National Plan requires that the Town Centre First principle is used when locating development. Our Settlement Centres are highly sustainable locations, which have good access to services and facilities and also more sustainable modes of transport. A sequential approach should be taken thereafter for locating development.

Should it not be possible to locate a development close to the settlement centre then the provision of adequate services, facilities and community and physical infrastructure will be required, alongside improvements to sustainable transport modes including public transport and active travel routes.

The design of buildings is equally as important as the location and design of sites. The RLDP will seek to ensure that more developments are low or zero carbon, using sustainable materials that support the objectives of the circular economy. Buildings should be designed to the highest standards, using high quality sustainable materials and energy efficient heating technologies, thereby reducing energy consumption.

The County Borough's green spaces, open spaces, naturally rich diversity of semi-natural habitats and soils, trees, and soils play a crucial role in carbon reduction and in tackling climate change, for example through carbon storage, natural cooling and helping reduce pollution. Therefore, the RLDP will seek to protect and enhance these important natural assets.

Our good quality agricultural land provides the opportunity to grow our own food, reducing food miles. High value agricultural land will be protected, in line with national policy.

The use of brownfield land in preference to greenfield land for development will be supported, however it is acknowledged that there is a lack of brownfield land in RCT to deliver all new development.

Appropriate renewable energy schemes will be supported and more detailed policies will be prepared at the Deposit stage. The RLDP will strive to further reduce waste generation and to support the continued excellent work in recycling and innovation in this area. Waste will be subject to detailed policies at deposit stage.

SP2:
Placemaking and Sustainable Communities

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **2**, **3**, **4**, **5**, **6**, **7**, **9**, **10**, **11**, **12** and **13**

2

New development will be expected to contribute to the vision of the future of RCT, which is for communities that are inclusive, cohesive, safe, supported and valued.

Development should include proposals for a mix of uses, where possible, that ensure the creation of sustainable places. This is not only for the site itself but also for the community it is to become part of. Multiple new developments can bring benefits for the existing community, be they housing, employment, retail, travel, leisure or open space uses etc.

In doing so, all development will be expected to be designed to a high standard that promotes the prosperity, health, happiness and well-being of the community as set out in the principles of Welsh Government planning policy and the concept of 'Placemaking'.

To achieve this, development should be:

Design
- Be accessible, connected, safe and allowing ease of movement both within the development and to the wider existing community for all users.
- Responsive to climate change and adaptable.
- Respond to the local context and character, respecting and enhancing the distinct natural, historic, cultural and built environments within RCT.
- Design for effective biodiversity, habitat and tree protection, mitigation and enhancement.
- Be appropriate in scale, density and layout.
- With regards to housing, they should provide an appropriate and diverse mix of housing types and sizes, which cater for the needs of all, and which can adapt to changing needs over time.

Well-being of Communities
- Contribute to the health and well-being of communities, including safeguarding amenity, public realm, provision of open space, recreation space and landscaping.
- Incorporate new and connected green infrastructure, promoting biodiversity.

Sufficient Infrastructure
- Ensure that there is capacity and availability of infrastructure to serve new development and its communities. Where this is not the case, development will be required to contribute to the improvement of such infrastructure and/or provide new infrastructure.

Resources
- Incorporate, where possible, on-site energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.
- Sustainably manage water and waste.

SP2: **Placemaking and Sustainable Communities** (continued)

2 The Revised Local Development Plan is committed to the creation of sustainable communities and places, which offer a high standard of living. The plan embraces the concept of place-making, as set out in national policy, which seeks to create high quality development, promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being.

The RLDP will also support the vision of the Well-being Plan, which seeks a more equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg. It aims to create healthy local neighbourhoods, as well as sustainable and resilient neighbourhoods. This policy supports the delivery of developments, which can contribute to these aims.

The creation of well-designed and high-quality development sites which create attractive, inclusive, and accessible communities to live, work and socialise are a priority for the RLDP. Development should allow people to feel safe, live within cohesive communities and help reduce inequalities experienced by some.

Proposals must consider the relationship, function and context of the site within its wider surroundings. This will include creating linkages between established and new development, strengthening connections between people and place.

The strong culture, heritage, and traditional character of Rhondda Cynon Taf and its assets should be respected and enhanced through the design process.

Developments should promote wellbeing and good physical and mental health, through including features such as green and open space, play space, access to nature, active travel routes and other spaces to encourage community cohesion. Where possible, these features should be linked to those existing in the wider community network.

SP3:
Flood Risk Management

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **3**, **4**, **9** and **10**

The RLDP will seek to ensure that new developments are located in places, which would not put them at an unacceptable risk of flooding, whilst ensuring that all development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant.

It will ensure that any new development does not increase local flood risk within and around the site being developed, nor in any of our existing communities.

The RLDP will further identify opportunities to reduce the potential scale and impact of flooding, such as:

- **Flood resilient methods of construction of new buildings and the overall development of sites.**
- **Enhancing and providing further green and blue infrastructure assets and networks for their multi-functional roles, including the reduction of flood risk through methods such as attenuation.**
- **Managing our natural assets in a more effective way, that could bring multifaceted benefits such as the management of heavy rainfall. This would include, but not be limited to, improving the condition of our peat bogs, floodplains and wetlands, protecting soils and minimising soil sealing, protecting trees and increasing areas of woodland regeneration and creation in RCT.**

More frequent and intense rainfall together with the topography of RCT increases the risk of flash flooding in RCT. More frequent rain also leaves the ground saturated which further increases the risk. The steep sided valleys cause rapid runoff of surface water towards the urban areas in the lower reaches, through ordinary watercourses and to the main rivers.

Planning Policy Wales sets out a range of comprehensive policy considerations for development proposals and flood risk. Technical Advice Note 15 sets out further guidance for development proposals associated with flooding from all sources.

The main rivers in RCT include the River Taff, River Rhondda, River Cynon and River Ely, which are all prone to flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. Main river flooding is often caused by river levels 'overtopping' their 'banks' and/or 'breaching' of defence structures. This risk is high in RCT, and is primarily owed to the urban extent of communities located in and around the river flood plains.

Local flood risk is defined as the risk from ordinary watercourses (or smaller streams and rivers), surface water and groundwater sources. Managing local flood risk is the responsibility of Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs); being RCT Council. Flooding from surface water and ordinary watercourses is the most common source of flooding in RCT.

This strategic flood risk policy further accords with and sits alongside the RCT Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan, the Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment, the Statutory Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for surface water drainage management (with RCT CBC being the SuDS Approval Body for new developments here).

It is intended that a comprehensive policy approach will be formulated at the subsequent Deposit Stage of the RLDP. This will include appropriate Development Management policies for proposals within the (Welsh Government) identified local flood risk zones. There will also be further policy to seek to reduce all local and main river flood risk in RCT, to expand upon some of the concepts raised in these Preferred Strategy policies .

SP4:
Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **4**, **9** and **10**

4

RCT is an area of biodiverse and varied landscapes, supporting a range of priority habitats and species. The Revised LDP will seek to maintain and enhance these qualities and features and leave the natural environment in a more biodiverse and resilient condition.

Our biodiversity landscape is protected by Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) designations. As set out in PPW, SAC and SSSI designations are the responsibility of NRW. SINC's are a Local Planning Authority designation.

Development and SINC:

- Development should be avoided on designated SINC sites.
- The intention of RCT is to provide strong protection for those elements of biodiversity in our SINC that are irreplaceable.
- Some SINCs support habitats that may have some capacity for mitigation, compensation and enhancement. Proposals on these sites will be expected to evidence that acceptable mitigation, compensation and enhancement is possible, whilst protecting the habitats and species for which they were designated.

All Development:

- All future development must evidence effective biodiversity mitigation and enhancement.
- On SINC, there will be a requirement for effective mitigation to be delivered on site. Only in cases where biodiversity delivery will be demonstrably more effective, and where local biodiversity connectivity, area and function are not compromised, will off-site provision be considered.
- Where mitigation or enhancement is demonstrably not achievable onsite, but where the mitigation and enhancement of habitat or species impacts incurred by development can be effectively delivered, off-site provision may be considered.

Welsh Government have declared a Nature Emergency and seek to embed further biodiversity considerations into the planning process; with revisions to Planning Policy Wales (expected) in autumn 2023. This also builds upon the Biodiversity Duty for public bodies established in S.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act.

Due to the high baseline biodiversity context of RCT, implementation of the diverse objectives of the RLDP, including both development and ecological aspirations, will be challenging. This strategic biodiversity policy aims to address Welsh Government policy in the context of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The SINC system provides the framework for biodiversity conservation in RCT and sets out the habitats and species of conservation concern, which require protection. Other areas of ecological importance in RCT include Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves, Living Landscapes sites and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS).

Further detailed development management policies will be prepared for the Deposit Plan and the current supplementary planning guidance will be reviewed.

SP5:
Green Infrastructure and Open Space

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **3**, **4**, **8**, **9**, **10**, **12** and **18**

5

All Green Infrastructure plays a significant role in providing appropriate habitats for biodiversity in RCT. The protection, management and enhancement of such places in RCT is therefore a key responsibility of the RLDP.

Further, several of the objectives and strategic policies within the Preferred Strategy allude to the wider ranging benefits of natural and more formal open spaces, including:
- Providing natural habitats for a range of biodiversity
- Physical and Mental Health and Well-being
- Active travel
- Sport and Recreation
- Flood Risk attenuation
- Carbon Storage
- Cooling Environments

There is a duty in the RLDP to ensure we fully identify and understand our Green Infrastructure in the County Borough. Accordingly, the Deposit Stage of the RLDP will undertake a comprehensive Green Infrastructure assessment, including additional Open Space and Play Space assessments.

These assessments will be further utilised to prepare a range of policy that would seek to:
- Appropriately protect Green Infrastructure and other public open spaces,
- Increase the number and total area of green space,
- Enhance the quality of green space through the implementation of well-designed management plans, and
- Consider potential additional uses for them such as flood alleviation and carbon storage.

Special Landscape Areas
It has been determined that the Special Landscape Areas (SLA) that were comprehensively identified in the current LDP will remain in place in the RLDP. The annual monitoring of the LDP has indicated that no change has occurred within these landscapes that has resulted in them losing their high quality features for which they were designated. The Deposit Stage of the RLDP will review the current SLA policies to ensure that they will continue to appropriately protect and enhance the quality and character of these landscapes.

Green Wedges
It is intended to undertake a review of Green Wedges for the Deposit Stage of the RDLP, utilising a new methodology, as prepared for the South East Wales Region.

SP6:
Housing

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **2**, **3**, **5**, **7** and **12**

6 **A housing requirement of 8,450 new dwellings has been identified to meet the Vision and strategic Objectives of the Revised LDP. The LDP Manual indicates a need to add a further minimum 10% flexibility allowance to the figure, to insure against any unforeseen issues and non-delivery of sites or overall numbers. The total Housing Provision for the RLDP plan period from 2022-2037 is therefore 9,295 dwellings.**

This positive level of housing provision will be achieved through three broad methods of delivery:

- Allocating deliverable land in appropriate locations that accord with the Preferred Strategy. These allocations will be fully determined at the Deposit Stage, although Potential Key Sites have been identified that may contribute significant numbers.
- The continued development of the committed sites within the identified Housing Landbank (as set out in the Housing Supply Paper).
- Supporting the development of windfall sites for residential development on appropriate sites, within settlement boundaries where established, in accordance with the Preferred Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy.

The table below, sourced from the **Housing Supply Paper**, indicates in detail how this overall provision is set out.

Rhondda Cynon Taf RLDP 2022-2037 Housing Provision			
Housing Provision	1	Dwelling Requirement	8,450
	2	10% Flexibility Allowance	845
	3	Total Housing Provision 2022-2037	9,295
Landbank Supply	4	Small sites landbank	621
	5	Large sites landbank	3,502
	6	Non-delivery allowance (20% reduction)	-825
	7	Current 'Landbank' sub total	3,298
Windfall Allowances	8	Small windfall sites	1,032
	9	Large windfall sites	1,596
	10	Windfall allowances sub total	2,628
Allocations Needed	11	Dwelling needed from allocations in order to meet the housing provision. i.e. Total Housing Provision, minus the landbank supply and windfall allowances.	3,369

The dwelling requirement was determined through the consideration of multiple areas of the evidence base. The outcome of this is set out in the Growth Options section of the Preferred Strategy.

6 The scale of spatial distribution of new housing allocations will align with the Preferred Strategy, with more houses to be allocated in the South than in the North. Initial assessment of the Candidate Sites has indicated that there are sufficient sites to accommodate the level of additional need. This distribution is in general alignment with the past completions over the current LDP plan period, which is also mirrored in the current landbank sites.

There are a known 1,561 dwellings on committed landbank sites with a fair expectation to come forward in the Northern Strategy Area in the first half of the RLDP plan period; with 2,562 in the Southern Strategy Area. Landbank sites have either already commenced or have secured planning permission and are deemed to be genuinely available for development.

By their nature, Windfall sites have not yet been fully identified. However, analysis of past trends in the **Housing Supply Paper**, (including the dismissal of abnormal trends), along with a proactive search for potential sites through a formal **Urban Capacity Study**, has indicated a reasonable likely contribution. Future windfall development proposals would be preferred on previously developed land and provided on a 'Town Centre First' approach, where possible. Proposals for the conversion of suitable structures to residential development in appropriate locations is also encouraged.

Other strategic policies that should be read alongside this in relation to future residential development, include firstly the Settlement Centres Policy, which sets out considerations for residential developments in Settlement Centres. The Placemaking and Sustainable Communities Policy, alongside the Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Policy then set out policy criteria from these perspectives.

Further detailed development management policy to guide future residential development will be included at the Deposit Stage of the RDLP. It will also set out further considerations for allowing exception and other sites for affordable housing.

It is necessary to provide diversity in the housing market and ensure a range of house types and sizes to cater for the needs of all members of our communities in RCT. The identified level of provision should help to increase the amount of good quality housing that is affordable across both social and private markets. Although it is inevitable that the scale of housing delivered will be greater in the south than in the north, it remains that significant new housebuilding will occur in all parts of RCT to allow for housing need and opportunities for all.

It is further considered that suitable provision of new housing is proposed in those areas of RCT with the highest proportions of Welsh Speakers.

Affordable Housing

The RCT Local Housing Market Assessment Draft Findings 2024 found that 5,672 affordable/non-open market dwellings are needed in RCT over the plan period 2022-2037. This equates to 378 each year on average or 67.1% of the total housing requirement of 8,450 dwellings. This would provide for both the current unmet needs and future needs of affordable housing, however any losses to the current affordable housing stock (such as demolition) would increase the number of affordable dwellings needed by a corresponding amount. Conversely, vacant affordable properties, which return to use, will reduce the need.

RCT has historically delivered approximately 25% of the overall annual dwelling completions as affordable since the adoption of the current LDP. Based on this average rate, RCT would need to develop an unrealistic 1,512 dwellings per year in order to meet the 378 affordable dwellings need.

If the current trend were to continue over the plan period, then it would be expected that approximately 140 affordable dwellings could be provided on average each year over the plan period, equating to a total of approximately 2,112. Given completion rates of affordable housing in more recent years, and the higher proposed level of overall housing delivery, this seems a very achievable figure.

6 Analysis within the **Housing Supply Paper** adds further confidence to this. Through current landbank affordable housing permissions, windfall sites and proposed allocations, it is considered feasible that up to 159 affordable dwellings could be delivered each year on average. This is further backed by the spatial distribution of the housing provision in the Preferred Strategy, which generally aligns with the **Local Housing Market Assessment's** identified housing market areas and scale of need. This 159 dwellings per annum would again equate to around 25% of the overall housing provision.

Further analysis of the viability of housing sites will seek to ensure definitive policies that will set out the required scale of developer contributions to the affordable housing need. This is expected to vary and correspond with the areas identified in the high-level **Viability Report**, prepared for the Preferred Strategy. These policies will be set out at the Deposit stage of the RLDP, which will also give further detail on how these contributions will be sought.

The successful delivery of wider affordable housing proposals from other sources will continue over the plan period, such as the WG Social Housing Grant, investment from RCT Council and continued re-investment by Registered Social Landlords in the County Borough.

Empty Homes
RCT has strategic intentions to bring empty residential properties back into use. Although this process is essentially bringing new houses onto the market, they cannot be considered like-for-like as a new dwelling that would be included in the housing provision. There are currently 2,894 empty properties across the County Borough, 2,120 of which are located in the Northern Strategy Area, while the remaining 774 are located in the Southern Strategy Area. With recent past rates of completion as high as 273 in 2021/22, along with current available funding, it is expected that this will continue to form the source of many available new, starter family homes, particularly in the northern strategy area.

A housing trajectory will be prepared for the Deposit stage of plan preparation, which will illustrate the phasing and delivery of housing allocations and known landbank sites over the lifetime of the plan. This will allow for effective monitoring of housing in the Revised LDP and ensure a sufficient supply of housing.

Gypsy and Traveller Communities Accommodation Needs
The Council and the RLDP are required to provide for the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller Communities. The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 updates the definition of a 'Gypsy and Traveller' to include Travelling Showpeople, alongside New Travellers where they are able to demonstrate a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in mobile homes. The Act mandates that the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities must be assessed; agreed by the Welsh Government; and adequate provision made. The mechanism for assessing provision is the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA).

RCTCBC's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, produced in February 2022 by Opinion Research Services, assessed the need for future Gypsy and Traveller accommodation throughout the County Borough. The principal objective of the study was to provide a robust assessment of existing and future needs for accommodation in the short-term and over the life of the Revised LDP (2022-2037). The accommodation needs have been compiled through a combination of desk-based research and stakeholder engagement, including members of the Travelling Communities.

RCT's GTAA is presently in draft form and is subject to approval by the Welsh Government. The assessment identifies an unmet need; as such, there will be a requirement to allocate sufficient pitches to address this. The assessment concludes that 27 pitches will be required over the plan period, which accounts for anticipated new household formation, based on current demographics. Having had due regard to the findings of the GTAA, the Council will provide the necessary policy framework to allow for the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities to be met, at the Deposit stage of RLDP plan preparation.

SP7:
Employment Land and the Economy

This Policy supports Objectives:
1, **14**, **15**, **16** and **18**

7

The RLDP aims to provide for a sustainable economy throughout RCT and to seek opportunities to support employment growth. New and expanding RCT businesses, along with inward investment opportunities will continue to be strongly supported, where appropriate in RCT.

Whilst supporting the Town Centre First national policy principle (for most development proposals), certain industrial and commercial ventures are more suitably located away from these centres.

Development proposals for new B1, B2 and B8 use classes will be supported, where otherwise considered acceptable and appropriate, on:
- Allocated Employment Sites.
- Available land on existing employment landbank sites.
- Redevelopment of existing employment landbank sites and or/units which are derelict, vacant or no longer fit for purpose. This may include the redevelopment of whole sites, down to the subdivision of units.

In exception to the above, opportunities for B1 office proposals should be sought in more appropriately located Settlement Centres. Where this is not possible, a sequential search approach for sites will be required, in line with the national Town Centres First principle.

Employment Allocations and Land within Existing Employment Landbank Sites	
	Hectarage
Employment Allocation (within the Key Site) at the former Tower Colliery site South of Hirwaun (NSA)	15 Ha
Employment Allocation at the Llanilid Key Site (SSA)	10 Ha
Available land within Existing Employment Landbank Sites in the NSA	19.8 Ha
Available land within Existing Employment Landbank Sites in the SSA	23.9 Ha
Total Employment Land Availability	68.7 Ha

Employment allocations and landbank sites are to be safeguarded to ensure that they are available for employment purposes. Therefore:
- Non B class uses are more appropriately located in the Settlement Centres and should be proposed there. Where this is not possible, a sequential search approach for sites will be required, in line with the Town Centres First principle.
- Those non B class use proposals that exhibit the characteristics of B1, B2 and B8 uses, and which could appropriately be accommodated on an employment site, may be supported.
- Small, ancillary uses which support the wider function of an employment site may be supported.
- Any proposals that would have an unacceptable adverse effect on the ability for existing or future B class uses to operate, or which would detract from the future vitality and viability of the employment site, will not be supported.

SP7: **Employment Land and the Economy** (continued)

7 The RLDP must maintain a suitable level of available employment land to facilitate new and allow for the expansion of existing RCT businesses, along with inward investment into the County Borough. RCTCBC commissioned the BE Group to undertake an Employment Land Review to ascertain need over the plan period. Using both methodologies detailed within the 2015 Welsh Government guidance Building an Economic Development Evidence Base to Support a Local Development Plan, there is a recommended need for 49 hectares of employment land from 2022-2037, including an appropriate allowance for a buffer, as detailed within the Development Plans Manual (Ed. 3).

As set out above, the Council has identified approximately 68 hectares of available employment land. This includes a new allocated site on the Llanilid Key Site and the re-allocation of the Tower Colliery site on the Land South of Hirwaun Key Site. There are also several sites in the Council's existing employment landbank. It should be noted that the proposed employment land at Llanilid is in addition to that identified in the Employment Land Review.

These sites will be safeguarded for employment opportunities throughout the RLDP plan period. This will ensure a continued supply of employment land, which will meet the needs of the economy locally and cater for potential inward investment opportunities. It is acknowledged that the total land available is greater than the overall need identified. However, not all of our existing employment landbank sites would necessarily be of a sufficient scale, or commercially attractive for larger investment opportunities. The Key Site allocations will ensure that opportunities for significant inward investment can be accommodated in excellent strategic locations, providing additional employment opportunities locally, whilst simultaneously having excellent access to the strategic rail and highway network.

Having this availability of employment land is integral to meeting the identified level of growth for the RLDP i.e. the realisation of the housing requirement and the associated expected increase in jobs over the plan period. This policy sits alongside the Settlement Centres policy in promoting opportunities for increased employment and achieving a sustainable economy across RCT.

It is nevertheless acknowledged that the expected jobs increase is to come from sources other than just these employment sites. The proposed level of housing growth for RCT will also result in increased jobs growth from other areas. This would include, but is certainly not limited to, public services and institutions, self employed/employed people who may not have a specific base (agile type working) and of course the growing number of people working from home.

SP8:
Settlement Centres

This Policy supports Objectives:
2, **3**, **4**, **5**, **6**, **11**, **12**, **14**, **15**, **16** and **18**

The Settlement Centres in RCT

The centres of the settlements in RCT are identified in many ways, and by formal and informal references. These would include town centres, retail centres, high streets, village centres, local centres or neighbourhood centres, etc. For clarity, the RLDP now considers these collectively as our 'Settlement Centres'.

The Settlement Centres are naturally linked to the wider settlement they are centrally located within, and therefore the RLDP Settlement Hierarchy. The many Settlement Centres across RCT all play a major role in their individual communities. Dependent on their scale and function, a number have a greater role supporting wider parts of RCT, whilst some have a recognised role and influence in the wider South East Wales region.

Shown below are the Settlement Centres in line with the Settlement Hierarchy. It is noted that some of the Principal Settlements and Key Settlements have more than one centre, due to their overall size. There is a clear primary centre in these places, with some secondary centres that serve certain parts of the wider settlement on a more local scale.

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY - SETTLEMENT CENTRES	
PRINCIPAL SETTLEMENT CENTRES	
Primary centre	**Secondary centre**
Aberdare	• Aberaman • Gadlys • Trecynon
Pontypridd	• Treforest
Talbot Green	• Pontyclun • Llantrisant Old Town
KEY SETTLEMENTS CENTRES	
Primary centre	**Secondary centre**
Ferndale	
Hirwaun	
Llanharan	
Mountain Ash	
Porth	
Tonypandy	• Penygraig • Williamstown
Tonyrefail	
Treorchy	

SMALLER SETTLEMENT CENTRES	
• Abercynon	• Taffs Well
• Church Village	• Ton Pentre
• Gelli	• Tonteg (Main Road Precinct and Cardigan Close Precinct)
• Llanharry	• Trebanog
• Llwydcoed	• Treherbert
• Maerdy	• Tyn-y-Nant
• Penrhiwceiber	• Tynewydd
• Pentre	• Ynyshir
• Penywaun	• Ynysybwl
• Rhydyfelin	• Ystrad

8 Placemaking in our Settlement Centres

There is a need to maintain much of the established functions of our Settlement Centres. However, the RLDP strongly supports their evolution to become all-encompassing, integrated and interconnected places for people to visit, enjoy, work and live. This would be in line with the national 'Town Centre First' principles.

The RLDP seeks to provide suitable flexibility to allow the centres to adapt and prosper, encouraging proposals that would enhance their vibrancy, vitality and viability. Our centres will also be supported to ensure that they can continue to appropriately serve the needs of their communities and RCT.

This policy therefore supports proposals that:
- Encourage a diverse and appropriate mix of uses, which supports the day and evening economies whilst increasing footfall throughout;
- Support all appropriate uses that would bring investment and people to the centres. This would include (but not be limited to), traditional 'A' class uses, community, leisure and hospitality proposals and development which supports the tourism offer in RCT;
- Provide appropriate, accessible, and adequate services and facilities to existing and growing communities of RCT;
- Provide appropriate commercial uses that would provide further employment opportunities;
- Are well designed and contribute positively to the overall built and natural environment of the centre;
- Create opportunities to utilise vacant land or buildings.

Residential developments in Settlement Centres will be supported in principle where:
- They provide appropriate new housing that will increase the vibrancy and vitality of the town centres; and
- Appropriate residential amenity of future occupiers is ensured; and
- The continued retail and all other commercial activities of surrounding properties should not be compromised; and
- In the cases of redevelopment or conversion of premises, residential development does not replace existing street level general commercial uses; and
- The development site is free from constraint; and where possible,
- Retail, service, leisure or wider commercial uses are located on ground floors of new developments in the centres.

SP8: **Settlement Centres** (continued)

8 **All types of development proposals within the Settlement Centres should be of an appropriate scale and use commensurate with the scale of the centre.**

A single boundary for each Settlement Centre will be confirmed in the Deposit Stage RLDP.

This policy seeks to ensure the future prosperity and suitability of our Settlement Centres. The principles within it should help to maintain their viability and vitality and also continue to provide appropriate services and facilities at a local, county wide and regional level. Further detail on the process of identification of these centres is set out in **The Settlement Centre Paper.** For note, the changes from the current LDP include the identification of new centres at Llanharry, Penywaun, Llwydcoed and The Precinct at Cardigan Close, Tonteg.

The Principal Settlement and Key Settlement Centres will be focal points for additional growth and strategic redevelopment opportunities. Appropriate commercial, leisure and residential (etc) uses will be encouraged within these locations, alongside their traditional functions to increase football and attract people from their communities, across RCT and from further afield. The three Principal Settlement Centres will continue to perform a sub-regional role, acting as the higher-level shopping, services, facilities and general visitor destination, for a wide catchment. The Key Settlement Centres will continue providing a similar role, albeit on a smaller scale and serving their respective areas within RCT.

The Smaller Settlement Centres play a very important role in providing for daily convenience shopping needs and other smaller services of the local communities. It is expected that any future proposals in these centres should accord with this policy, although it is acknowledged this would be at a commensurate scale.

These Settlement Centre locations are for the most part ones that also have good provision of, and/or good links to a variety of sustainable public transport modes or existing active travel routes. Many centres will see the benefits of the considerable investment in the South Wales Metro. This all clearly supports the principles of reducing dependence on private motor vehicles.

Furthermore, residential development in our Settlement Centres, or 'centre first' approach, is a key national planning policy aspiration. This policy will help to promote our centres for appropriate residential development, providing further diversity, and the most sustainable options, in the housing market in RCT.

9 SP9:
Tourism

This Policy supports Objectives:
6, **7**, **14**, **15**, **16** and **18**

Rhondda Cynon Taf is an area with a rich heritage and beautiful natural assets, which makes it a great destination for tourism. The RLDP seeks to grow the tourism sector in RCT through supporting the development of sustainable tourism in appropriate locations.

The RDLP will support and encourage:
- Tourism developments that will attract visitors from across the UK and further afield.
- Adventure, outdoor and 'eco' tourism proposals, which integrate into the area's natural beauty.
- Proposals that support and improve the tourism offer within the Principal Settlements and Key Settlements and that add to their future vitality and viability.
- Appropriate diversification of agricultural and other countryside businesses.

The RLDP will ensure that tourism proposals:
- Provide adequate infrastructure so as not to have an unacceptable adverse impact on existing communities.
- Would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on biodiversity, landscape or other designated features.
- Would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on existing tourism features or their settings.

The Preferred Strategy identifies a specific role for the expansion of the tourism industry in the NSA, to allow for an opportunity for diversification in the economy here. A Key Site that will incorporate tourism-based proposals, amongst other uses, has been identified on the former Tower Colliery site, Land South of Hirwaun.

In the NSA, proposals for tourism accommodation outside the settlement boundary will be subject to the above criteria. In the SSA tourist accommodation will only be supported within the settlement boundaries.

Further detailed development management policies will be prepared for the Deposit Plan.

The RDLP will support the aims of the RCT Tourism strategy, which seeks to increase tourist accommodation and support proposals that promote extended tourism trips.

The RDLP would like to build on the successes in this sector to see an expanded tourism offer for RCT.

The north and south of RCT have distinctly different characteristics, which means that in line with their respective strategy areas, a different approach to tourism is required. The northern strategy area with its high quality natural landscape features, culture and history means that it is appropriately placed to deliver a high quality tourism offer. The area has seen the growth in the tourism sector over the last few years with the opening and expansion of Zip World Tower and the ever-strong attraction of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. Walking and cycle routes in the area bring in considerable tourism usage and opportunities. This area is also undergoing some major infrastructure improvements through the dualling of the A465, and the South Wales Metro scheme making it even more accessible. The Rhondda Heritage Park is an established facility in the lower Rhondda.

SP9: Tourism (continued)

9 By encouraging the expansion of the tourism offer and industry in the NSA, the Preferred Strategy intends that it can offer diversification of the economy and create much needed jobs. Therefore, the approach in the NSA is to encourage the development of a sustainable tourism industry, which builds on the current tourism offer. The RLDP will seek to ensure that the north creates a tourism sector that attracts visitors from across the UK and internationally.

The Southern Strategy Area also has some existing larger tourism destinations including the Principal Settlement of Pontypridd, with its facilities such as the National Lido of Wales, and the Royal Mint Experience in Llantrisant; along with others on a smaller scale, including its attractive landscapes, which attract from a more local catchment. The SSA is also recognised as playing a part in accommodating for the demand for those who visit Cardiff. Tourism in this strategy area will be carefully supported to ensure the appropriate sustainable expansion of our current tourism offers in the SSA.

The RLDP supports and encourages the conversion and re-use of historic and heritage buildings and assets into uses for tourism in our Principle Towns and Key Settlements. This will secure the future of these valuable assets but also bring a benefit to the built environment and these existing communities alike, which in turn will attract more visitors.

The tourism industry makes an important contribution within Rhondda Cynon Taf; consequently, the Council will encourage proposals that enhance the tourism offer within the County Borough. This will include providing tourism accommodation, widening the scope of the tourism offer and improving the visitor experience.

Tourism is an important and growing sector for Rhondda Cynon Taf. As identified by the Welsh Government, it is a priority sector for Wales generally accounting for 9% of jobs in the country. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Tourism Strategy estimates that tourism within the County Borough is worth over £179 million to the local economy. As such, the strategy states: "it is vital that communities become aware of the importance of capturing the benefits of increased visitors and local businesses develop skills which will benefit the customer service and tourism sector" (RCTCBC, 2021, p10). This is supported by the Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024) Making a Difference and the Public Service Board Well-being Plan Our Cwm Taf. The plans recognise the importance of developing the tourism offer, whilst supporting businesses within the region and acknowledging that the strength in RCT's visitor offer stems from our local communities.