

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2006-2021)

Draft Infrastructure Topic Paper

April 2008

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BACKGROUND

In January 2007 the Council issued for public consultation the Local Development Plan: Preferred Strategy. The Strategy was the first stage of the new statutory local development plan (LDP).

The next stage in the plan making process is the production of a deposit draft LDP. In order to ensure the soundness of the emerging LDP and transparency in the plan making process, the Council has produced a series of topic papers.

The topic papers address the main area of policy to be considered in the LDP. **It should be stressed that these papers are a starting point for policy development, through the sustainability appraisal process and as the Council's evidence base develops, emerging LDP policy will evolve and be refined.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this topic paper is to determine draft policies for physical and community infrastructure in the Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021. Physical infrastructure includes water (both supply and waste), utility services (electricity, gas and telecommunications) and foul and surface water sewerage (including sewage treatment). Community infrastructure takes into account education (primary and secondary schools as well as special needs), health facilities (hospitals and primary care provision), social services, emergency services (ambulance, fire and police)

and other community facilities (libraries, cemeteries, community centres and churches). By adopting the Local Development Plan process the Council will provide evidence that may identify a need to maximise the use of existing infrastructure or consider further additions that will support development in Rhondda Cynon Taf until 2021.

To accomplish this the topic paper will outline:

- **The policy context** for infrastructure provision, including an explanation of national, regional and local policy;
- **Key Issues in Rhondda Cynon Taf**, which relate specifically to infrastructure;
- **Preferred Strategy**, policy in respect of infrastructure requirements and representations to the Strategy;
- **Feedback from Consultations** on infrastructure provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and
- **Draft LDP Policy**, which provides a policy context for infrastructure in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

People, Places, Futures – The Wales Spatial Plan (adopted 2004)

The Wales Spatial Plan provides a framework for the future spatial development of Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taf along with the neighbouring authorities of Cardiff, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly and the Vale of Glamorgan has been

identified as part of the South East – Capital Network Zone. The vision for the Capital Network is:

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

Whilst the Spatial Plan may not provide a detailed framework for physical and community infrastructure development in South East Wales it does nevertheless provide a number of clear propositions. These include the following:

- Strengthening the status of the south Wales Valleys as a desirable place to live, work and visit by securing good access to jobs and services.
- Regenerate socially deprived areas by breaking the cycle of poor educational attainment, low skill levels, economic inactivity and health inequalities.
- Improve collaboration between higher education and further education institutions, ELWa and the WDA in order to identify opportunities that will strengthen the knowledge economy and local skill base, as well as attracting and retaining talent in the area, and
- Well performing schools and investment in the development of children in their early years will be vital to long term regeneration and attracting people to reside in the south Wales Valleys.

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

Turning Heads – A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020 as the name suggests, outlines a strategy for regenerating the northern Valley areas of South East Wales. In Rhondda Cynon Taf the strategy area includes Treorchy, Treherbert, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Aberdare. The objectives of the programme reflect those of the Wales Spatial Plan in seeking to ensure:

- An attractive and well used natural, historic and built environment;
- A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities;
- A well educated, skilled and healthier population;
- An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience, and
- Public confidence in a shared bright future.

With regards to Infrastructure, Strategy Programme 5: Joined-Up Solutions for Business comments as follows:

“Informed by market demand, we will actively encourage developers to improve and expand the range of business premises in the area, including within town centres, to help the Heads of the Valleys become a realistic investment option alongside centres such as Newport and Cardiff. This will be supported by good community and public transport links connecting people with jobs and services”.

Strategy Programme 6: Linked Opportunities for Businesses and Individuals comments as follows:

“We will ensure that active programmes of business birth and incubation, supplier-chain and enterprise development, knowledge transfer and clustering are in place across the Heads of the Valleys. These will be linked to the major investment activities in housing renewal, roads and infrastructure, construction, environmental technologies / energy efficiency, and leisure and tourism”.

Strategy Programme 7: Improving Health Through Prevention comments as follows:

“Through sharing expertise, information and ideas, we will identify and extend best practice across the region to promote the prevention of ill health”.

Strategy Programme 8: Integrated Lifelong Learning comments as follows:

“We will ensure that basic and key skills are at the heart of learning opportunities, and that they are explicitly linked to employability”.

Strategy Programme 11: Visualising the Strategy comments as follows:

“The Heads of the Valleys Spatial Framework will also help us to identify where strategic development (such as employment, transport, health, housing and the environment) is needed in order to serve the best interest of the area as a whole”.

Planning Policy Wales (March 2002)

Assembly Government infrastructure policy is embodied in Planning Policy Wales. Supplementary guidance in relation to infrastructure is contained in Technical Advice Note 19. The Planning Policy Wales Companion Guide (2006) relates the guidance to the LDP system, identifying clear statements of national policy that should only be repeated where local circumstances require.

The Assembly Governments objectives for infrastructure are to provide:

- To protect and improve water resources through increased efficiency and demand of water, particularly in those areas where additional water resources may not be available;
- To ensure that appropriate sewerage facilities are provided to convey, treat and dispose of waste water in accordance with appropriate legislation and sustainability principles;
- To facilitate the development of an advanced broadband telecommunications infrastructure throughout Wales;
- To promote an integrated approach to the provision and renewal of environmental and telecommunications infrastructure, and
- To ensure that environmental and telecommunications infrastructure is provided in such a way as to enable sustainable development objectives to be met, avoiding adverse impacts on the environment (including the

natural and historic environment), local communities and health”.

In order to achieve this the Assembly Government will seek to ensure that:

- Local planning authorities should seek to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and should consider how the provision of different types of infrastructure can be co-ordinated, and
- Local planning authorities should consider both the siting requirements of the utility companies responsible for these services to enable them to meet community needs and the environmental effects of such additional uses.

Water supply and waste water management:

- Local planning authorities should promote increased efficiency and demand management of water resources, particularly in those areas where additional water resources may not be available;
- LDP's should take water-related issues into account from an early stage in the process of identifying land for development and redevelopment, and
- Local planning authorities should encourage the use of sites where existing water supply and/or drainage provision problems can be solved and seek to avoid the use of sites where adequate water supply and/or drainage provision is unlikely to be achieved.

Telecommunications:

- Local planning authorities are encouraged to respond positively to telecommunications development proposals, while taking account of the advice on the protection of urban and rural areas, and
- LDP's should set out policies and proposals for the location of telecommunications development, allocating sites for major developments and including criteria-based policies to guide telecommunications developments where sites other than those identified in the plan may be proposed.

Technical Advice Note 19: Telecommunications (2002)

This technical advice note not only takes account of a growth in the telecommunications industry and technology, but also the new social and economic demands for communications, in addition to the Welsh Assembly Governments environmental policies.

3. LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

A Better Life – Our Community Plan sets out a framework for creating a brighter future for everyone who lives and works in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The plan was developed through the Better Life Consortium, during 2003/2004. The Community Plan identifies 5 key themes under which are a series of local level aims. The key themes are:

- Safer Communities
- Our Living Space

- Our Health and Well Being
- Boosting Our Local Economy
- Learning for Growth

The key themes identified in the Community Plan have been developed into strategies for improving the quality of life in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Infrastructure can be considered as part of the Bro Dysg Five Year Strategy, Health and Well Being Strategy and Community Safety Strategy.

The Bro Dysg Five Year Strategy sets out the following three strategic priorities:

- Increase support to all learners to enable them to achieve their full potential
- Improve the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance for all learners
- Provide high quality life and work skills

Of particular relevance to this topic area are two priorities set out under the Support to all Learners theme. The priorities seek to:

- Enable children to develop the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning through good quality pre-school and early education services.
- Improve service availability and access to appropriate learning opportunities.

The Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy sets out the following key themes for action:

- Work and Health
- Mental Health and Emotional Well-being
- Children and Young People
- Transport and Access
- Maintaining Independence
- Healthy Environments
- Community Collaboration and Prevention

Of particular relevance to this topic area is a priority set out under the Maintaining Independence theme. The priority seeks to:

- Develop and implement a series of joint commissioning strategies to ensure access to appropriate, high quality services to deliver them in a more co-ordinated, accessible and timely manner.

The Community Safety Strategy sets out the following themes for action:

- Property Crime
- Violent Crime
- Substance Misuse
- Youth Safety
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Environmental Transport and Road Safety
- Reassurance
- Crime Against Business

Of particular relevance to this topic area is how South Wales Police will tackle crime and disorder:

- The approach will help to co-ordinate activities more effectively by bringing 'core' staff together in one place.

4. KEY ISSUES IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

The key issues to be addressed by the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP have been identified by making an assessment of the following:

- The results of pre-deposit consultation with key stakeholders;
- The results of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Exercise;
- A review of baseline social, economic environmental information, and

The issues identified through this process will directly inform the development of the spatial strategy for the LDP.

Pre Deposit Consultation

The infrastructure issues identified are as follows:

- Need for better infrastructure – transport and community facilities;
- External perception of the borough needs to be improved;

- Deprivation, disparity of opportunity must be tackled;
- The relationship between health, education, employment and housing;
- Sewerage capacity for new development;
- Creating sustainable communities;
- Education, and
- Perception of personal safety needs to change.

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment identified the following infrastructure issues:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf has a large amount of land designated for biodiversity protection;
- The topography and water environment of Rhondda Cynon Taf means that large areas of the valley floors are prone to flooding, especially along river frontages where ribbon development has occurred;
- The undulating nature of the topography of the area will guide suitability of locations for development;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's foul drainage system is old and overloaded;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf ranks 5th in England and Wales (out of 376 areas), for the proportion of population with a limiting long term illness, and general health 'not good', and
- 44% of the population have no qualifications.

Baseline Information

Infrastructure issues identified are as follows:

- The population of Rhondda Cynon Taf has remained largely unchanged between 1991-2001. However this masks significant local variation, between 1991-2001 the population of the central and northern valleys declined by 5% whilst the population of the south increased by 10%;
- The highest levels of 'health' deprivation in Rhondda Cynon Taf are located in the central and northern valleys (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005);
- 27% of residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf suffer with a limiting long term illness (Office for National Statistics);
- 40% of residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf have no academic qualifications (Office for National Statistics), and
- The highest levels of 'educational' deprivation in Rhondda Cynon Taf are located in the central and northern valleys (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005).

5. PREFERRED STRATEGY

The preferred strategy provides the following policy framework for infrastructure development in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Objectives of the Local Development Plan

Paragraph 4.2 of the Preferred Strategy (January 2007) lists 16 objectives for the LDP. The following objectives are the most relevant to the topic area:

- "Promote integrated communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all;
- Provide for a sustainable economy;
- Improve, protect and enhance the water environment;
- Promote efficient use of land and soils, and
- Provide a high quality built environment that promotes community pride".

Development Strategy

Paragraphs 6.1 – 6.11 of the Preferred Strategy sets out a development strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf. The strategy area is divided into two distinct parts:

- Northern Strategy Area, and
- Southern Strategy Area.

The Northern Strategy area comprises the key settlements of Tonypany, Porth, Treorchy, Treherbert, Ferndale, Tylorstown, Mountain Ash and Hirwaun and the principal town of Aberdare. In this area the emphasis is on building sustainable communities and halting the process of depopulation and decline.

The Southern Strategy area includes the principal town of Pontypridd and Llantrisant and key settlements of Tonyrefail and Llanharan. In the south of the County Borough the emphasis is on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole.

The strategy recognises the important role that principal towns and key settlements play in providing services of both local and county importance. Where possible, development will be focused on the principal towns and key settlements of the County Borough in order to support and reinforce the important role these centres play as places for social and economic activity.

The Preferred Strategy makes no direct reference to physical and community infrastructure in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Management of the built environment has been considered in other topic papers.

Strategic Policy

The strategic infrastructure policy is as follows:

SP 12 – Community Infrastructure

The impact of developments on local community infrastructure will need to be addressed by appropriate on site provision or contributions to off site improvements. Planning obligations will be sought to secure the necessary physical, social, economic and environmental infrastructure related to the development. Such requirements may include:

- a) Affordable housing;**
- b) Open space, play and youth facilities;**

- c) Investment in local education provision;**
- d) Highways and public transport improvements;**
- e) Environmental works including benefits to the natural and historic environment;**
- f) Waste management and recycling**
- g) Investment in community and indoor leisure provision;**
- h) Public artworks;**
- i) Renewable energy, and**
- j) Energy efficiency features.**

Representations to the Preferred Strategy

Representations made in respect of the infrastructure provision relate to issues of a general nature. Outlined below is a summary of the main representation submitted in respect of Infrastructure.

General Representations in relation to Infrastructure

Issue: The sewerage undertakers should be consulted with regard to the adequacy of existing infrastructure.

Response: The sewage undertakers will be consulted in the formulation of the emerging LDP, specifically in respect of

candidate sites and preparation of the infrastructure elements of the plan.

Issue: Strategic and non-strategic sites – The local implications of issues such as flooding and the availability of infrastructure should be explored in the context of national planning policy objectives.

Response: The sewage undertakers will be consulted in the formulation of the emerging LDP, specifically in respect of candidate sites and preparation of the infrastructure elements of the plan.

Issue: A Broad Level Flood Consequences Assessment must be undertaken of the all sites prior to being allocated in the emerging LDP.

Response: Noted. The Council, in discussion with the Environment Agency will undertake a Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment.

FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATIONS

Methodology

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council conducted a consultation exercise in February and March 2008 enquiring whether any of the local infrastructure providers anticipated that there would be a need for improvements or additions to infrastructure and services in the County Borough in order to support development up to 2021. The Council explained:

- The identification of eight strategic sites as opportunities for residential and employment use and enhanced leisure and amenity provision;
- The aim to provide land for 14,850 new residential dwellings with an expected house-building rate of 990 dwellings per annum;
- A projected 225 hectares of employment land would be required over the Plan Period, and
- Where possible development would be focused in the principle towns and key settlements identified in the Preferred Strategy.

As part of this process the Council consulted 83 individual infrastructure providers. Those consulted included gas and electricity providers, communication and water companies, health and social services, communication providers, community councils and neighbouring local authorities. A full list of those providers that were consulted is in Appendix 1.

Of the 83 individual infrastructure providers that were consulted only 12 responses were received, yet infrastructure providers will have another opportunity to comment on the need for improvements or additions to infrastructure during the public consultation period that accompanies the statutory deposit of proposals.

Below is a brief summary of the physical and community infrastructure comments. Any feedback received in relation to transport and highway infrastructure has been considered in the relevant topic paper. All summaries will highlight the anticipated effects that the infrastructure providers identified

as a result of expected development in Rhondda Cynon Taf up to 2021, and will also include any measures that the infrastructure providers will need to take in order to cope with increased demand on associated infrastructure.

Summary of Physical Infrastructure Providers

Mobile Operators Association

Mobile Operators Association does not foresee any problems in terms of infrastructure provision given that telecommunications development for mobile phone base stations tends to be reactive as opposed to proactive. Due to the nature of technology it is not realistic to consider development on a strategic basis. The need for a new site would be driven by the need for further capacity in the area, possibly as a result of new large scale residential, commercial or industrial development.

National Grid

National Grid, as the holder of a licence to transmit electricity under the Electricity Act 1989, has a statutory duty to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical transmission system of electricity. National Grid does not distribute electricity to individual premises, but separate regional companies own and operate electricity distribution networks and it is the role of these local companies to distribute electricity to homes and businesses.

National Grid has a duty to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical transmission system for the conveyance of gas. National Grid also has to respond to requests for new gas supplies in certain circumstances, in addition to new gas transmission infrastructure developments, which are periodically required to meet increases in demand and changes in patterns of supply. However, network developments to provide supplies to the local gas distribution network are often as a result of overall demand growth in a region rather than site-specific developments.

The Energy White Paper makes clear that UK energy systems will undergo a significant change over the next 20 years. To meet the goals of the white paper it will be necessary to revise and update much of the UK's energy infrastructure during this period. As a result, there will be a requirement for the expansion of national infrastructure, for example overhead power lines, underground cables and new gas pipelines, together with new forms of infrastructure, such as smaller scale distribution generation and gas storage sites.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, National Grid's electricity assets include the following:

- 4YW line – 400,000-volt route from Swansea substation in Swansea through Rhondda Cynon Taf to Cilfynydd substation in Caerphilly.
- 4YU line – 400,000-volt route from Pembroke substation in Pembrokeshire through Rhondda Cynon Taf to Rassau substation.
- ZZB line – 275,000-volt route from Aberthaw in the Vale of Glamorgan to Upper Boat substation in

Rhondda Cynon Taf to Cilfynydd substation in Caerphilly.

- Upper Boat – 275,000-volt substation.

The level and location of electricity generation remains a major factor in determining the need for transmission reinforcements. However, in some areas, for example where demand exceeds generation, it is the demand factor that exerts the greater influence and as such there is an increasing need for accurate demand forecasts in terms of both level and location. National Grid can connect new demand up to 150MW within most zones without requiring major transmission reinforcement. However, a large localised demand increase could well precipitate the need for major work depending on the precise location.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, National Grid's gas transmission assets include the following:

- 2 Feeder Gilwern / Rhigos
- 2 Feeder Rhigos / Dyffryn Clydach

In relation to the 8 Strategic Sites described in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy, National Grid advises that the following infrastructure is relevant:

1. Overhead lines run through the following sites:
 - Site 7 Mwynydy / Talbot Green (candidate site no. 352 and 355)

With regard to development in the vicinity of overhead lines it should be noted that National Grid does not own the land on which its overhead lines are sited, but obtains the rights from individual landowners to place equipment on their land. There are no planning restrictions preventing development on land beneath or adjacent to overhead lines, but it is National Grid policy to seek to retain existing overhead lines in-situ because of the strategic nature of the national network and that statutory safety clearances must be maintained at all times.

2. The following sites have Gas Transmission pipelines running through them:
 - Site 5 Land South of Hirwaun / Penywaun (candidate site no. 487, 488, 489, 493 and 494)

National Grid's underground pipelines are protected by permanent agreements with landowners or have been laid in the public highway under its licence. These grant legal rights that enable National Grid to achieve efficient and reliable operation through maintenance, repair and refurbishment of the gas transmission network. As such, National Grid require that no permanent structures are built over or under pipelines or within the zone specified in the agreement, materials or soil are not stacked or stored on top of the pipeline route and that unrestricted and safe access to any of its pipelines must be maintained at all times.

Based on the construction and distribution of new residential and employment land in Rhondda Cynon Taf, development should, in principle, not represent a major issue for National Grid's electricity or gas transmission network.

Summary of Community Infrastructure Providers

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Health Board (LHB)

Based on the construction and distribution of new residential development the LHB identified increased pressure on existing services. The situation is exasperated by the possible closure of GP Practices and the scarcity of suitable sites, both of which will prevent the development of new premises to deal with increased demand for medical services.

At present the LHB propose the development of new primary care premises in Hirwaun, Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Cwmaman, Porth, Tonypany and Tonteg. An additional need for new builds was identified in Miskin, Llanharran and Brynna in order to reduce pressure on existing GP surgeries and provide suitable premises to full proof services.

The LHB has identified a need for closer collaboration with the Council to consider using 'healthy urban planning' as an approach to development in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This approach would highlight the importance of recognising the health implications of policy and practice in urban planning, together with the potential to pursue health objectives as a central part of urban planning work.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Education and Lifelong Learning

Comments have been noted by the Education and Lifelong Learning Department on education provision with regards to development of the eight strategic sites proposed in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy. The comments are as follows:

Site 1: Former Maerdy Colliery Site, Rhondda Fach

Depending on the proposed number of housing units a new Primary School may be required or alternatively the extension / remodelling / refurbishment of an existing school. While secondary and Welsh Medium school provision is adequate in the area, there is surplus capacity in all schools. If housing development is modest it may be that existing schools can admit additional pupils without adaptation in order to address the issue of surplus capacity and regenerate schools in the area.

Site 2: Former Fernhill Colliery Site, Blaenrhondda

Depending on the proposed number of housing units a new Primary School may be required or alternatively the extension of both Treorchy Comprehensive and the relatively new Penpych Primary School. There is little surplus capacity in both Primary Schools and Secondary and Welsh Medium Schools in the area.

Site 3: Former Phurnacite Plant, Abercwmboi, Cynon Valley

Depending on the proposed number of housing units a new Primary School may be required in the area or alternatively an extension to an existing school. There is limited surplus

capacity in the region, with existing developments at Rose Row and Tirfounder Fields further exacerbating the limited surplus capacity in schools in the area. Secondary provision at Mountain Ash has sufficient capacity, although the Welsh Medium Sector in the Cynon Valley is already oversubscribed resulting in a need for the Council to address this under provision.

Site 4: Robertstown / Abernant – Aberdare

The provision of additional Primary Education places on this site will be a necessity given that all schools in the locality are either full or over capacity in both the Welsh and English Medium sectors. Statistical evidence reaffirms an over subscription in schools that is likely to rise within the next 5 years. This site should be considered in conjunction with other sites in the area, given that Abernant Primary School requires urgent replacement with a new build, the size of which is likely to be determined by the number of housing units proposed.

Site 5: Land South of Hirwaun / Penywaun

At present, primary education provision in Hirwaun, Penywaun, Rhigos and Penderyn is adequate to meet the needs of local communities, with some surplus capacity available. However, the scale of the proposed site will require new, exclusive provision to be built, both English and Welsh Medium. Existing secondary schools in the upper Cynon Valley may also require extension, or possibly new provision depending on the number of homes built.

Site 6: Cwm Colliery and Coking Works, Beddau

At a National Assembly Planning Enquiry it was accepted that additional primary education provision would be required to provide for the number of housing being proposed. Given limited surplus capacity in schools in the area and the considerable size of the proposed development, the requirement may be for a new English Medium Primary School, together with an extension of the local secondary school. Welsh medium provision is adequate in the area at present, but depending on the scale of development, small scale, additional provision in the Welsh Medium Primary sector may require consideration.

Site 7: Mwyndy / Talbot Green Area

The provision of additional school places, in all education sectors, with the exception of Welsh Medium Secondary, for this site will be a necessity given that all schools in the locality are either full, or are over capacity and cannot be extended any further. Firm evidence of precise education requirements can only be provided when the number of housing units is known, but it appears likely that a minimum of two primary schools will be required. There will also be a requirement to relocate Y Pant Comprehensive School and extend its provision, given that the existing site is included as part of the development land. Taking this site in conjunction with other proposals in the area, a new secondary school, in addition to Y Pant may be required.

Site 8: Former OCG Site, Llanilid, Llanharan

Statistical evidence already exists of over subscription in schools in the locality. The scale of the proposed development will mean that new provision exclusively serving the site will be required, the amount of which will depend on the proposed number of housing units. It appears likely that a minimum of one large or two smaller primary schools will be required, one English medium and possibly one Welsh medium. There may also be a need to examine secondary school provision in conjunction with other developments in the area, such as Mwyndy / Talbot Green.

Coleg Morgannwg

The College's Estate Strategy is currently being rewritten and the anticipated findings will support proposals for an Estate Reconfiguration and Rationalisation Project (ERRP) that will embrace major developments at the Nantgarw, Rhondda and Aberdare campuses in accordance with the College's financial strategy. Such development is expected to include major new builds, refurbishment projects to retain buildings, demolition of existing buildings and external works improvements.

The first priority of Coleg Morgannwg is to acquire land opposite the existing campus at Nantgarw for a new build development that will enable relocation from the present campus at Rhydyfelin. The move will consolidate the college's presence to one campus in Taf Ely serving approximately 4,000 learners (pa).

The ERRP proposes rationalisation of buildings / space within the existing campuses through phased sequential redevelopment and improvement programmes that will include elements of major new build, refurbishment, demolition and external works. The projected outcome is designed to not only improve services to communities in RCT, but also offer a college estate that provides high quality fit-for-purpose training accommodation and facilities.

Coleg Morgannwg has identified problems associated with a significant change in pedestrian / vehicular movement and increased demand on public transport infrastructure through the new build at Nantgarw. Moreover, with no significant expansion plans of training provision at the Rhondda Campus, problems of vehicular and pedestrian access to the site still remain a cause for concern. Both these comments have been noted by the Council and considered in the relevant topic paper.

Libraries and Museums

The library service has a policy of trying to relocate libraries to shared premises in order to reduce running costs and provide opportunities for partnership in working. The library service is currently looking at options to do this at Glyncoch, Llanharan, Maerdy, Cwmbach, Tonyrefail and Abercynon, but currently has no resource in their core budget to cover relocation costs.

The library at Rhydyfelin is currently being upgraded with external funding from WAG. A further bid has just been given to WAG for 2008/09 for the upgrading of Treorchy Library. Library resources have been used for minor refurbishments at

Aberdare library in 2007/08 with plans for minor refurbishment at Pontypridd Library in 2008/09.

The library service is currently looking at opportunities to change opening hours at several libraries in the Rhondda Fach and Rhondda Fawr in-line with changing customer demand. Opening hours have recently been extended at Abercynon, Hirwaun, Mountain Ash and Penrhiwceiber libraries, in contrast to curtailed opening hours at Cwmbach and Ynysybwl libraries, both as a result of changing customer demand.

The proposed development plans in Rhondda Cynon Taf will necessarily impact on library service provision in terms of increased demand for services as more housing is provided. To date, housing development in Hirwaun has already led to increased demand, which the library service has tried to meet through extended opening hours and an increase in ICT facilities. The implications of development in the 8 areas of the library service are as follows:

Maerdy:

The library service would like to relocate this library to larger premises with improved facilities;

Fernhill:

No implications from development plans;

Abercwmboui:

No implications from development plans;

Robertstown:

Additional housing will lead to greater use of Aberdare Library. Given that this is one of the 3 main libraries in RCT, it should easily absorb the increase in demand;

Hirwaun:

Additional housing would justify a new library with improved facilities;

Beddau:

The existing library will need to be improved;

Mwyndy / Talbot Green:

Additional housing would justify a new library with improved facilities, and

Llanharan:

Additional housing would justify a new library that could replace the currently failing library in Llanharan.

Jehovah Witnesses

Jehovah Witnesses currently have 6 congregations in Rhondda Cynon Taf with upward of 100 persons attending each congregation throughout the region. Some congregations are held in church buildings that are now becoming expensive to maintain and have limited parking facilities. Jehovah Witnesses have highlighted the need for new meeting halls with adequate parking, but do not foresee any future problems with proposed residential development and employment land allocations in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council

Based on the location and proposed development of the Strategic Sites, the Community Council believe there is a need to upgrade infrastructure in the area in order to resolve the imbalance of residential dwellings to shops, health care, leisure and other essential facilities. The construction and distribution of new residential development will confirm the requirement of shops, employment and leisure facilities in addition to improved policing in the area. Employment land on the outskirts of the village will be catered for by the duelling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road, yet the Community Council believe restoring the rail link to Hirwaun / Penderyn would benefit the area. The latter point has been noted by the Council and considered in the relevant topic paper.

Pontyclun Community Council

Pontyclun centre is currently attracting a diversity of small businesses that heighten employment opportunities and the vitality of village life. However, the Community Council is conscious that Llantrisant town centre will expand with the development of 'out-of-centre' retail units that lack all the characteristics associated with village life. Further concern is expressed with the scale of employment at Mwyndy and Llantrisant town with the potential separation of employment opportunities in the north of Rhondda Cynon Taf, together with the disincentive to small scale business development that Pontyclun is currently attracting. Additional concerns

have arisen from employment opportunities in relation to traffic congestion on the A473, A4119, Junction 33 and 34. These comments have been noted by the Council and considered in relevant topic papers.

The view of Pontyclun Community Council is that housing development in Pontyclun would create a level of congestion that would be destructive to the village and that no further amount of infrastructure provision would be compatible with the proposed level of housing development. The Community Council expressed concern that further residential development may require an expansion of Pontyclun Primary School beyond the limits of what is possible within the scale of an effective primary school.

City and County of Cardiff

Cardiff County Council believe that proposed development in Rhondda Cynon Taf will create considerable pressure on strategic transport networks, including the main transport corridors into Cardiff and key routes straddling the Rhondda Cynon Taf and Cardiff boundary. As a result, Cardiff Council has called for a continuation of joint communication between the two authorities and throughout the southeast Wales regional transport consortium, in order to bring forward major, regionally strategic transport infrastructure. All comments have been noted by the Council and considered in the relevant topic paper.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Based on the location and proposed development of strategic sites, Merthyr Tydfil Council believe that some locations are remote from existing residential settlements and emphasise the importance of new employment land on public transport routes. Merthyr Council also consider it vital to ensure that new residential development is supported by excellent transport links and sustainable modes of public transport given the potential increase in traffic on the existing highway network. All comments have been noted by the Council and considered in the relevant topic paper.

Bridgend County Borough Council

Bridgend County Council believe that development proposals in the southwest of Rhondda Cynon Taf will have substantial implications on the utilization of strategic highway networks extending into Bridgend. As a result, Bridgend Council has expressed concern regarding infrastructure provision and the provision of services in Bridgend.

6. DRAFT LDP POLICY

Revised Strategic Policy 12

The impact of developments on local community infrastructure will need to be addressed by appropriate on site provision or contributions to off site

improvements. Planning obligations will be sought to secure the necessary physical, social, economic and environmental infrastructure relating to the development after consultation with community and physical infrastructure providers. Such requirements may include:

- a) Affordable housing;**
- b) Open space, play and youth facilities;**
- c) Investment in local education provision;**
- d) Highways and public transport improvements;**
- e) Environmental works including benefits to the natural and historic environment;**
- f) Waste management and recycling**
- g) Investment in community and indoor leisure provision;**
- h) Public artworks;**
- i) Renewable energy, and**
- j) Energy efficiency features.**

Justification

Consultation with community and physical infrastructure providers in Rhondda Cynon Taf will not only ensure that sustainable development benefits communities in the County Borough, but will also make an appropriate use of land that will provide a sense of place, particularly in the more deprived northern strategy areas.

Area Wide Policies

The planning systems objectives for infrastructure is:

- To provide adequate and efficient infrastructure, including services such as education and health facilities along with water supply, sewers, waste management, electricity and gas (the utilities) and telecommunications, all of which is crucial for the economic, social and environmental sustainability of all parts of Wales.

In order to achieve this it will be necessary to ensure that:

- Water resources are protected and improved through increased efficiency and demand management of water;
- To provide appropriate sewerage facilities in order to convey, treat and dispose of waste water;
- To facilitate the development of advanced broadband telecommunications, and
- To ensure that environmental and telecommunications infrastructure is provided that not only meets sustainable objectives but avoids adverse

impacts on the environment, local communities and health.

There is a requirement for additional community infrastructure provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf consistent with a rise in demand from the proposed number of new residential dwellings. The 'Key Issues' Chapter of the LDP outlines the variations for community and physical infrastructure in terms of population growth, health deprivation and academic qualifications that need to be addressed if a uniform development of infrastructure provision is going to be established in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The policy framework contained in the LDP will ensure the provision of appropriate infrastructure locations that will meet the needs of existing and future residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Policy INFA 1 – Sites for Community Facilities

Proposals for new community buildings and extensions will be considered favourably, provided that:

- i) No detriment to residential amenities would result;**
- ii) Traffic generation would be within the capacity of associated highways;**
- iii) Safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle and motor vehicle access are provided;**
- iv) There is convenient access to public transport, and**
- v) No detriment to the environment would result.**

Justification

Community and physical infrastructure provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf will help to create sustainable communities, especially in the more deprived northern strategy areas. By creating a mix of land uses that will serve the needs of growing communities in the County Borough the Council will establish an efficient use of land that will generate an inherent sense of place in settlements throughout the borough.

Policy INFA 2 – Health Care Facilities

Proposals for the development of new or improved health care facilities will be permitted where the proposal accords with the requirements of Policy AW 39.

The provision of quality medical facilities in accessible locations is crucial to the well being of communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Research undertaken for the LDP indicates that the provision of improved medical facilities are required throughout the County Borough.

The exact size, nature and location of the provision of the new provision have yet to be determined. The purpose of this policy is therefore to provide a positive context for the provision of improved health care facilities throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Policy INFRA 3 – Higher Education Facilities

Proposals for the development of new or improved higher educational facilities will be permitted where the proposal accords with the requirements of Policy 39.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a number of established and well respected higher educational facilities. These include the University of Glamorgan, Rhondda College and Coleg Morgannwg. The continued improvement of the campuses in which these facilities are located is essential in order to provide modern and effective learning environment.

Research undertaken for the LDP indicates that there are a number of proposals for relocation, reconfiguration and expansion of higher education facilities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Unfortunately many of these plan are in the early stages of development. The purpose of this policy is therefore to provide a positive context for the development and improvement of higher educational facilities in the County Borough.

Policy INFRA 4 – New Educational Facilities

Land within the following allocated sites will be identified for the provision of new educational facilities:

- i) Strategic Site 2: Former Fernhill Colliery Site, Blaenrhondda**
- ii) Strategic Site 3: Former Phurnacite Plant, Abercwmboi**
- iii) Strategic Site 4: Robertstown / Abernant, Aberdare**

- iv) **Strategic Site 5: Land South of Hirwaun/Penywaun**
- v) **Strategic Site 6: Cwm Colliery and Coking Works, Beddau**
- vi) **Strategic Site 7: Mwyndy/Talbot Green Area, and**
- vii) **Strategic Site 8: Former OCC Site Llanilid, Llanharan, and**
- viii) **Land at Trane Farm, Tonyrefail**

For the purpose of this policy educational facilities include the provision of new and/or improved primary and secondary schools and new or improved library facilities.

The LDP will allocate land for the construction of 14,850 new dwellings during the period 2006 –2021. The volume of new housing proposed will inevitably result in the need for improved educational facilities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In order to meet this need the provision of new, on site educational facilities will be required on each of the sites identifies in this policy.

The Council will continue to monitor educational provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf through out the plan period. Where a shortfall in provision is likely to occur as a result of new residential development, the Council will require the development to take appropriate steps to ameliorate the situation.

Policy INFRA 5 - Multi Functional Buildings

Development proposals that promote the multi functional use of education and community buildings will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- i) New or improved facilities meet an identified community need,**
- ii) Proposed uses are compatible; and**
- iii) The new or improved facilities are accessible to the local community they are intended to serve, with good public transport, pedestrian and cycle links as well as accessibility by car.**

The use for a single purpose of primary schools, libraries, community centres and leisure and cultural facilities doesn't always make good economic sense. The use of buildings for a number of different functions can reduce construction and maintenance costs and ensure efficiency in the use of land. The provision of multi use facilities which are accessible and meet the needs of the communities they are intended to serve will be supported.

Careful consideration will be given to ensuring that proposed uses of facilities, are the best and most appropriate way of meeting the needs of the community, that intended uses are compatible and that the facility is accessible to all sectors of the community.

7. FURTHER ADVICE

If you require any further advice or assistance in respect this or other LDP documents or wish to be placed on the Council's consultation database please contact a member of the Local Development Plan Team at:

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Pontypridd
CF37 2TB

Email: LDP@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk

Telephone: 01443 495193