LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2006-2021)

Preferred Strategy Background 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 LDP Core Strategy will provide a robust land use framework for Rhondda Cynon Taf. The core strategy will seek to ameliorate the social, economic and environmental issues facing the County Borough and maximise the opportunities for sustainable regeneration. The strategy will build a sustainable and realistic land use framework which balances need with opportunity.

In order to do this the topic paper will outline:

- **The current and emerging policy context** for Core Strategy, including a explanation of national, regional and local policy;
- **Response to the Representations** received to the strategy outlined in the LDP: Preferred Strategy, and
- **Draft LDP Policy,** which outlines a core strategy amended in light of the changes to the policy context and the representations.

2. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Welsh Assembly Government published strategies, legislation, Planning Policy Guidance, Circulars and statements that the Council takes into account in preparing a local development plan. Key Assembly Government strategies include:

Environment Strategy for Wales (2006)

The Environment Strategy for Wales outlines the Welsh Assembly Government's long-term strategy for the environment of Wales, setting out the strategic direction for the next 20 years.

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide the framework within which to achieve an environment which is clean, healthy, biologically diverse and valued by the people of Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government wants to see the

Welsh environment thriving and contributing to the economic and social wellbeing and health of all of the people of Wales.

People, Places, Futures – The Wales Spatial Plan (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 be 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".

The strategy for the Capital Network is :

- To strengthen and reintegrate the existing system of towns and cities within South East Wales so that the area functions as a coherent urban network, and can compete internationally. Integrated transport is crucial to this; and

- To work with our partners to develop an ambitious programme of joined up regeneration action along the Heads of the Valley corridor which will complement the upgrade of the A465. The aim of this will be to improve quality of life, retain and attract residents and

increase prosperity of the whole area focusing initially in unlocking the potential of Merthyr Tydfil and Ebbw Vale.

The Consultation draft **Wales Spatial Plan Update 2008: People, Places, Futures** sets out a vision for how each part of Wales should develop economically, socially and environmentally over the next 20 years. The document further develops the concept of a Capital Network and provides a more detailed context for the development of the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP. The Wales Spatial Plan proposes that distinct approaches for the three areas that make up the Capital Network Region. The three areas are:

- City / Coast
- Heads of the Valleys Plus, and
- Connections Corridor

Rhondda Cynon Taf is within the Heads of the Valleys Plus and Connections Corridor.

The Spatial Plan Update identifies 14 hub settlements which it sees as vital to the success of the city-region. Included, are the Rhondda Cynon Taf settlements of Aberdare, Pontypridd and Llantrisant.

In addition to the strategy areas and hub settlements the document also identifies 3 Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOA). The SOAs are centred around:

- The Heads of the Valley Road (A465);
- Llantrisant and North West Cardiff, and

- St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan

SOAs offer the potential for development to take place in a sustainable way which will benefit the region as a whole. The strategic location of Rhondda Cynon Taf means that the County Borough has a crucial role to play in the development of all of the SOAs.

Wales: A Vibrant Economy (Consultation Document)

Wales: A Vibrant Economy is the Assembly Government's Strategic Framework for Economic Development. It sets out a vision of a vibrant Welsh economy delivering strong and sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities for all. The delivery of this vision is built around Wales' core strengths: an increasingly skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial workforce; an advanced technology and knowledge base; strong communities; a stunning natural environment and an exceptional quality of life.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

National policy guidance in respect of land use planning is contained in a range of policy documents, statements, and advice notes. Of particular significance are the following:

Planning Policy Wales (2002)

The Welsh Assembly Governments planning policy is embodied in Planning Policy Wales (2002). The guidance is

Planning Policy Wales has been amended a series of Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statements (MIPPS) on the following subjects:

- Planning for Renewable Energy (01/2005),
- Planning for Retailing and Town Centres (02/2005),
- Housing (01/2006) and
- Planning for Good Design (01/2008).

Draft MIPPS on Planning for Health and Well Being and Climate Change have also been subject to consultation..

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 in where local circumstance require.

Further supplementary guidance in relation to a number of topic areas are contained in the following Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

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

Funding under these priority themes has and will continue to result in significant investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf. During 2006 the Gateways and Greenways project resulted in environmental enhancement work being undertaken along the Cynon Valley River Park. In 2007 work began on the implementation of the Ferndale Regeneration Strategy. Once complete the strategy will result in townscape and public realm improvements.

The focus on the heads of the Valley area will provide will provide an excellent opportunity for the development of the northern valley area of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The dualling of the A465 in particular will significantly improve communication links to West Wales and England.

Consultation Draft: Regional Waste Plan: 1st Review

The Regional Waste Plan provides a long-term strategic waste management strategy and land-use planning framework for the sustainable management of waste and recovery of resources in South East Wales.. The aims of the RWP 1st Review are:

- To minimise adverse impacts on the environment and human health.
- To minimise adverse social and economic impacts and maximise social and economic opportunities.
- To meet the needs of communities and businesses.
- To accord with the legislative requirements, targets, principles and policies set by the European and national legislation and policy framework.

The RWP 1st Review comprises two main elements –

- The RWP Technology Strategy which provides strategic information on the types of waste management / resource recovery facilities required in South East Wales; and
- The RWP Spatial Strategy, which provides strategic information on the types of locations likely to be acceptable.

These two elements have been developed through different processes; they tackle different issues and have been presented separately. The RWP 1st Review does not bring the two elements together in order to identify which technologies should be located at which site or in which Area of Search. The process of combining the two elements is a policy making exercise which can only be undertaken at the local level though the Local Development Plan preparation process.

The RWP 1st review was subject to public consultation during 2007. The final version of the document is expected to be published in 2008.

Draft Regional Technical Statement for Aggregates 2007

The Regional Technical Statement (RTS) has been produced by the South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party (SWRAWP). MTAN1 sets an overarching objective which seeks to ensure a sustainably managed supply of aggregates (which are essential for construction), striking the balance between environmental, economic and social costs. The draft RTS has been formulated to help guide individual Unitary Authorities in South Wales on how to implement these mineral planning policies in the formulation of their individual Local Development Plan (LDP) policies and allocations.

The draft RTS was subject to public consultation during 2007. The final version of the document is expected to be published in 2008.

Regional Transport Plan

The South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta) is an alliance of 10 south-east Wales local authorities working with others to deliver better transport in south east Wales region. It is constituted as a joint local government committee.
The Transport Act (Wales) 2006 requires the consortia to produce a regional plan for transport for all modes of travel. Sewta produced an outline of the Regional Transport Plan

(RTP) in January 2007. The draft RTP is due by summer 2008 and the final RTP by March 2009.

Sewta's vision for the RTP is to provide a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system for south east Wales that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and protects the environment, where public transport, walking, cycling and sustainable freight provides real travel alternatives.

The priorities of the RTP will be to:

- improve access to services, facilities and employment, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling;
- provide a transport system that increases the use of sustainable modes of travel;
- reduce the demand for travel;
- develop an efficient and reliable transport system with reduced levels of congestion and improved transport links within the SEWTA region and to the rest of Wales, the UK and Europe;
- provide a transport system that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, is safer and supports local communities;
- reduces significantly the emission of greenhouse gases and air pollution from transportation;
- ensure that land use development in south east Wales is supported by sustainable transport measures; and
- make better use of the transport system

3. LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

'A Better Life': Our Community Plan (2004 –2014)

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 by a range of local partners, 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. Each of these strategies identify a series *Th* of individual areas for action. These 'action areas' comprise a range of social, economic and environmental objectives to be addressed by the Council and its partners over the life of the Community Plan.

Whilst the focus of the LDP will not be directly on delivering the actions identified in the Community Plan strategies, it will *Th* nevertheless provide a framework that will play an important role in assisting in the delivery of many of these improvements.

4. PREFERRED STRATEGY

The LDP: Preferred Strategy provides the following policy framework for the development in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

"The Preferred Strategy Option

The Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP strategy will provide the planning framework within which the Plan's objectives, policies and proposals are to be set. The strategy has been derived having regard to the national, regional and local policy context, social, economic and environmental factors, the availability of land suitable for development and the unique characteristics of the County Borough. It is clear from an examination of these factors that Rhondda Cynon Taf is an area of great social, economic and environmental diversity. A spatial strategy that advocates a single approach would be inappropriate and fail to positively address the needs of the County Borough as a whole.

The preferred strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf will therefore advocate a different approach for development in the north and in the south of the County Borough. In doing so the strategy defines and explains the role that principal towns ,key settlements and strategic sites will play in achieving the spatial objectives of the plan.

The Key Diagram shown in Appendix 5 illustrates the preferred Strategy Option and shows the extent of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough. The northernmost part of the County Borough lies within the the Brecon Beacons National Park. This area is subject to a separate

development plan which is the responsibility of the National Park Authority.

The preferred strategy for the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP is as follows:-

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 in into two distinct parts:-

- *Northern Strategy Area, and*
- *Southern Strategy Area*

The Northern Strategy area comprises the key settlements of Tonypandy, 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 towns 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 of these centres play as places for social and economic activity. . For the purposes of the LDP strategy, Principal Towns are defined as Pontypridd, Aberdare and Llantrisant (including Talbot Green). These towns are important hubs for activity by acting as gateways for new investment, innovation and sustainable development.

The Principal Towns of Aberdare and Llantrisant (including Talbot Green) are areas in which significant new housing, employment and retail development will be accommodated. Topographical constraints mean that significant growth will be difficult to accommodate within the principal town of Pontypridd. The emphasis in this area will be on consolidation and redevelopment. Land for residential development to accommodate the needs of the growing population of Pontypridd will be provided in the surrounding settlements of Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and Beddau.

Key Settlements are geographically smaller and less strategically significant than the principal towns, nevertheless these settlements provide important services and act as centres for commercial and community activity. For the purpose of the LDP Key Settlements are defined as Tonypandy, Tonyrefail, Treorchy, Mountain Ash, Porth, Ferndale, Llanharan and Hirwaun. These key settlements will act as the focal point for growth in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the plan period.

The settlements of Llanharan and Hirwaun are presently less

significant than the other Key Settlements identified in the strategy. These areas are however, in excellent strategic locations and are capable of assimilating significant additional residential and commercial development".

Strategic Policy

The strategic policies in respect of the Development Strategy are as follows;

SP 1 - Development in the North

Development proposals in the Northern Strategy Area will provide appropriate forms of growth to address problems of deprivation, and high levels of social and economic need, and will help build sustainable communities. In the Northern Strategy Areas the Principle Town is Aberdare and the Key Settlements are Tonypandy, Porth, Mountain Ash, Treorchy, Ferndale and Hirwaun.

SP 2 – Development in the South

Development proposals in the Southern Strategy area will promote sustainable development by providing a managed form of growth which will consolidate existing settlement patterns, have regard to the social and economic function and identity of settlements and the surrounding countryside, existing or potential capacity to provide necessary infrastructure and reduce the need to

travel. Principle Towns are Pontypridd and Llantrisant and the Key Settlements are Tonyrefail and Llanharan.

Representations to the Preferred Strategy

Representations made in respect of the Strategy element of the Preferred Strategy fall broadly into 4 areas – representations in respect of paragraphs 6.1- 6.4, paragraphs 6.5-6.11, Strategic Policies 1 and 2.

Outlined below is a summary of the main representation submitted in respect of these areas. Responses to each of the main representations are included

1. Representations to Paragraph 6.1 –6.4 – Preferred Strategy

General: Clarity needs to be provided on how other key sub-regional work is influencing the Preferred Strategy and how settlements within RCT will relate to other settlements outside RCT

Proposed Response: Noted. The preferred strategy will be amended to reflect the influence key sub regional work and the relationship with other settlements in the region.

General: Support is expressed to the Preferred Strategy option.

Proposed Response: Support is welcomed**.**

General: The different approach to be taken in the Northern and Southern Strategy Area is welcomed.

Proposed Response: Support is welcomed

General: The Preferred Strategy needs to acknowledge Rhondda Cynon Taf's position and role in the wider Network City region.

Proposed Response: Noted. The Preferred Strategy will be amended to acknowledge Taf's position and role in the wider Network City region.

General: Concern is expressed that no Principle Towns has been identified in the Rhondda Valley.

Proposed Response: The settlements identified as principle towns are those that for strategic socio-economic reasons are important to the success of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the development of the wider region. There is currently no settlement of significant socio-economic importance in the Rhondda Valley which is appropriate for designated as a principle town.

General: An approach, which focuses new development in 3 Principle Towns, will only serve to maintain the disparities between the north and south.

Proposed Response: The Preferred Strategy identifies 3 Principle Towns and 8 Key Settlements which will provide the main focus for development in Rhondda Cynon Taf.   In addition the emerging LDP will identify a number of smaller settlements in which small scale development may occur.

General: Development in the Northern Strategy is over reliant on strategic sites and should consider the need to identify smaller sites to ensure the development need is met.

Proposed Response: The emerging LDP will identify a range of sites in addition to the strategic sites to meet the development needs of the County Borough.

General: The suggested levels of growth in the Southern Strategy Area are not sustainable.

Proposed Response: The emerging LDP will give careful consideration to the levels of growth in the Southern Strategy area to ensure development remains within acceptable levels.

General: The Preferred Strategy is too dependent on the delivery of the 8 strategic sites.

Proposed Response: In addition to the 8 strategic sites the emerging LDP will identify a range of smaller sites intended to meet local needs.

2.   Representations to Paragraph 6.1 –6.4 – Development Strategy

General: Support for Aberdare, Pontypridd and Llantrisant as a Principle Town.

Proposed Response: Support is welcomed
General: Treorchy should be identified as a Principle Town

Proposed Response: The settlements identified as principle towns are those that for strategic socio-economic reasons are important to the success of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the development of the wider region. Treorchy, although important within a Rhondda Cynon Taf context, is not of significant socio-economic importance to be designated a principle town.
General: Support for Tonyrefail, Mountain Ash, Tonypandy, as a Key Settlement.

Proposed Response: Support is welcomed

General: Church Village, Beddau and Abercynon should be identified as a key settlement.

Proposed Response: Key settlements are those which benefit from a range of services and facilities, functions and locational relationships. Church Village, Beddau and Abercynon do not have the necessary range of services and facilities to be designated as Key Settlements. The emerging LDP will however, identify the settlements as suitable to accommodate future development.

General: Talygarn, Groesfaen and Efail Isaf should be identified as a settlement capable of accommodating housing growth.

Proposed Response: The LDP will seek to promote growth in sustainable locations. As part of the plan making process an assessment will be made of the suitability of all settlements in Rhondda Cynon Taf to accommodate further development. The settlements of Talygarn, Groesfaen and Efail Isaf will be assessed as part of this process.

General: Objection to residential development in Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and Beddau to serve Pontypridd.

Proposed Response: The LDP will seek to promote growth in sustainable locations. As part of the plan making process an assessment will be made of the suitability of all settlements in Rhondda Cynon Taf to accommodate further development. The settlements of Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and Beddau will be assessed as part of this process.

General: Significant objection is made to new housing development in Hirwaun until the necessary road and social infrastructure is in place.

Proposed Response: Noted the Council recognises the need for improved community and transportation infrastructure and will seek to address the issues through the plan process.

General: Objection is made to new housing development in Llanharan until the Llanharan Bypass and necessary social/community infrastructure is in place.

Proposed Response: Noted the Council recognises the need for improved community and transportation infrastructure and will seek to address the issues through the plan process.

General: Opposition is expressed to further residential development in Llanharry, Talygarn, Brynsadler and Pontyclun.

Proposed Response: The LDP will seek to promote growth in sustainable locations. As part of the plan making process an assessment will be made of the suitability of all settlements in Rhondda Cynon taf to accommodate further development. The settlements of Llanharry, Talygarn, Brynsadler and Pontyclun will be assessed as part of this process

General: Concern that the emphasis of the strategy on sustainable communities has only been applied to the Northern Strategy Area and not the Southern Strategy Area.

Proposed Response: The emphasis placed on building sustainable communities in the Northern Strategy Area is in recognition of the impact many negative socio economic factors are having on those communities. The intention is to ensure that the communities in the Northern Strategy Area become as prosperous as those in the south.

3.   Representation   to   Strategic   Policy   SP   1   –
      Development in the North

Policy SP1:   SP1 Locational Strategy need to make reference to protecting the natural and built heritage in the promotion of growth in the strategy areas.

Proposed Response: Noted. The reasoned justification of the policy will include reference to the need to protect the natural and built environment.

Policy SP1: The policy - identifies the principle towns and key settlements; however, the strategic policy should provide some elaboration of what this means in relation to any development proposals.

Proposed Response: Noted the strategic policy will be amended to provide clarity about the purpose of the policy and the implications for development proposals

4.   Representation   to   Strategic   Policy   SP   1   –
      Development in the South

Policy SP2: Support is expressed for this policy.

Proposed Response: Support is welcomed

Policy SP2: SP2 Locational Strategy need to make reference to protecting the natural and built heritage in the promotion of growth in the strategy areas.

Proposed Response: Noted. The reasoned justification of the policy will include reference to the need to protect the natural and built environment.

Policy SP2: Opposition is expressed to further residential development in Llanharry, Talygarn, Brynsadler and Pontyclun.

Proposed Response: The LDP will seek to promote growth in sustainable locations. As part of the plan making process an assessment will be made of the suitability of all settlements in Rhondda Cynon taf to accommodate further development. The settlements of Llanharry, Talygarn, Brynsadler and Pontyclun will be assessed as part of this process

Policy SP2: Support is expressed for the main theme of the Preferred Strategy that we should aim to constrain the concentration of growth along the M4 which an entirely market led approach would encourage and redirect the potential for growth in a more distributed way throughout the county borough.

Proposed Response: Support is welcomed

Policy SP2: The policy - identifies the principle towns and key settlements; however, the strategic policy should provide some elaboration of what this means in relation to any development proposals.

Proposed Response: Noted the strategic policy will be amended to provide clarity about the purpose of the policy and the implications for development proposals

5. <u>DRAFT LDP POLICY</u>

CORE STRATEGY

The Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP strategy will provide the planning framework within which the Plan's objectives, policies and proposals are to be set. The strategy has been derived having regard to the national, regional and local policy context, social, economic and environmental factors, the availability of land suitable for development and the unique characteristics of the County Borough. It is clear from an examination of these factors that Rhondda Cynon Taf is an area of great social, economic and environmental diversity. A spatial strategy that advocates a single approach would be inappropriate and fail to positively address the needs of the County Borough as a whole.

The strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf will therefore advocate a different approach for development in the north and in the south of the County Borough. In doing so the strategy defines and explains the role that principal towns, key settlements and strategic sites will play in achieving the spatial objectives of the plan.

The Key Diagram shown in figure (TBA) illustrates the preferred Strategy Option and shows the extent of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough. The northernmost part of the County Borough lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park. This area is subject to a separate development plan which is the responsibility of the National Park Authority.

The core strategy for the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP is as follows:-

Development Strategy

The LDP core strategy will seek to promote sustainable regeneration for Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. The strategy area is divided in into two distinct parts:-

- **Northern Strategy Area**, and
- **Southern Strategy Area**

For the purpose of the LDP the **Northern Strategy Area** will comprises Tonypandy, Porth, Treorchy, Treherbert, Ferndale, Tylorstown, Mountain Ash, Aberdare and Hirwaun. The emphasis in this area is on building sustainable communities and halting the process of depopulation and decline.

Strategic road and rail links means that the Northern Strategy Area benefits from good communication links with Cardiff, the Brecon Beacons, Neath Port Talbot and communities in the Heads of the Valleys region such as Merthyr Tydfil and Cearphilly. The location of the Strategy Area in respect of the A465 means that the excellent communication links also exist with Swansea and the West Midlands.

The position of the Northern Strategy Area in the City Network Region[1] means that it benefits from being part of the Heads of the Valley Programme[2] and within the Heads of the Valley Road (A465) Strategic Opportunity Area[3](SOA).

The **Southern Strategy Area** includes Pontypridd, Llantrisant (including Talbot Green), Tonyrefail and Llanharan. In the south of the County Borough the emphasis is on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole.

Strategic road and rail links the Southern Strategy Area is good communication links with Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend. The position of the Strategy Area in relation to the M4 means that excellent communication links also exist with West Wales, South West England and London.

As in the north the Southern Strategy Area is part of the Capital Network Region[1] and benefits from being within the Llantrisant and North West Cardiff SOA. The area also has close links with the St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Within these areas the strategy will recognise the important role 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. For the purposes of the LDP strategy, **Principal Towns** are defined as Pontypridd, Aberdare and Llantrisant (including Talbot

Green). These towns are important hubs for activity by acting as gateways for new investment, innovation and sustainable development.

The position of each of the towns in respect of the strategic transportation network means that these settlements are important to the promotion of regeneration in Rhondda Cynon Taf and economic growth in the wider region. Each of the Principal Towns has been identified as a 'hub settlement'[4] in e Wales Spatial Plan.

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The Principal Towns of Aberdare and Llantrisant (including Talbot Green) are areas in which significant new housing, employment and retail development will be accommodated. Topographical constraints mean that significant growth will be difficult to accommodate within the principal town of Pontypridd. The emphasis in this area will be on consolidation and redevelopment. Land for residential development to accommodate the needs of the growing population of Pontypridd will be provided in the surrounding settlements of Church Village, Llantwit Fardre and Beddau.

Key Settlements are geographically smaller and less strategically significant than the principal towns, nevertheless these settlements provide important services and act as centres for commercial and community activity. For the purpose of the LDP Key Settlements are defined as Tonypandy, Tonyrefail, Treorchy, Mountain Ash, Porth, Ferndale, Llanharan and Hirwaun. These key settlements will

act as the focal point for growth in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the plan period.

The settlements of Llanharan and Hirwaun are presently less significant than the other Key Settlements identified in the strategy. These areas are however, in excellent strategic locations and are capable of assimilating significant additional residential and commercial development.

In addition to the identification of Principal towns and Key Settlements the strategy recognises the importance smaller settlements that offer a limited range of services can play in providing for local needs. For the purposes of the LDP defined as Rhigos, Penywaun, Cwmbach, Aberaman South, Penrhiwceiber, Abercynon, Ynysybwl, Treherbert, Pentre, Maerdy, Ystrad, Tylorstown, Ynyshir, Cymmer, Glyncoch, Church Village, Efail Isaf, Beddau, Llanharry, Gilfach Goch, Glyncoch Cilfynydd, Hawthorn, Ton-Teg, Llantwit Fardre, Rhydyfelin and Taffs Well. The exact geographical definition of the smaller settlements is included in Appendix ?

Strategic Policies 1 and 2

SP 1 Development in the North

Development proposals in the Northern Strategy Area will provide appropriate forms of growth to address problems of deprivation, and high levels of social and economic need, and will help build sustainable communities. In the Northern Strategy Areas the Principle Town is Aberdare and the Key Settlements are

Tonypandy, Porth, Mountain Ash, Treorchy, Ferndale and Hirwaun.

The Northern Strategy Area has suffered significant decline since the wide spread closure of the collieries in the South Wales Coalfield in the mid 1980's. The Strategy Area has suffers from high indices of deprivation, unemployment, reliction, loss of services and inevitably depopulation. A or internal road network, low house building rates and a lack of meaningful inward investment have exacerbated the situation.

The Strategy Area does however, have a strong sense of community pride, many towns and villages with fine architectural history and a spectacular landscape that rivals that of the adjoining Brecon Beacons National Park.

The LDP will seek to build a strong, sustainable community in the Northern Strategy Area by providing a land use framework that:-

- Promotes large scale regeneration schemes in the Principal Towns of Pontypridd and Aberdare and in the Key Settlements of Mountain Ash, Ferndale and Treorchy;

- Focuses residential development in locations which will support and reinforce the roles of Principal Towns and Key Settlements;

- Promotes accessibility by securing investment in new roads, public transport improvements, walking and cycling;

- Encouraging a strong, diverse economy which supports traditional employment and promotes new form of employment in the leisure and tourism sectors;

- Ensures the removal of dereliction by promoting the reuse of under used land and derelict land and buildings; and

- Protects the cultural identity of the Strategy Area by protecting built heritage and the natural environment.

SP 2 – Development in the South

Development proposals in the Southern Strategy area will promote sustainable development by providing a managed form of growth which will consolidate existing settlement patterns, have regard to the social and economic function and identity of settlements and the surrounding countryside, existing or potential capacity to provide necessary infrastructure and reduce the need to travel. Principle Towns are Pontypridd and Llantrisant and the Key Settlements are Tonyrefail and Llanharan.

In comparison the Southern Strategy Area has experienced considerable growth in recent years. The Strategy area has seen significant new house building and inward investment that has transformed the economy of the area. The ability of

the Southern Strategy Area to absorb further growth at existing rates, without social and environmental degradation, is being tested.

The key location of the Southern Strategy area means that it has a viral role to play in ensuring the future economic prosperity of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Economic growth however, must be carefully managed in order to ensure that the social and environmental needs of the Strategy Area are fully addressed.

The emphasis in the Southern Strategy Area will be on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. This will be achieved by the development of a land use framework that: -

- Protects the culture and identity of communities by focusing development within defined residential settlements boundaries;

- Promotes major residential development with a sense of place which respects the character and context of the Principal Town and Key Settlements of the Southern Strategy Area;

- Ensures the provision of important community services and facilities;

- Provides opportunities for significant inward investment, in sustainable locations, that will benefit the economy of Rhondda Cynon taf and the Capital Network Region;

- Reduces daily out commuting by private car and promotes sustainable forms of transport;

- Promotes accessibility by securing investment in new roads, public transport improvements, walking and cycling; and

- Provision of new retail development that meets local needs and assists in retaining retail expenditure within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

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6. 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:

Development & Regeneration Unit,
Floor 5,
Ty Pennant,
Catherine Street,
Pontypridd
CF37 2TB

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

Telephone: 01443 495193